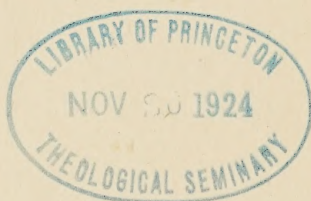


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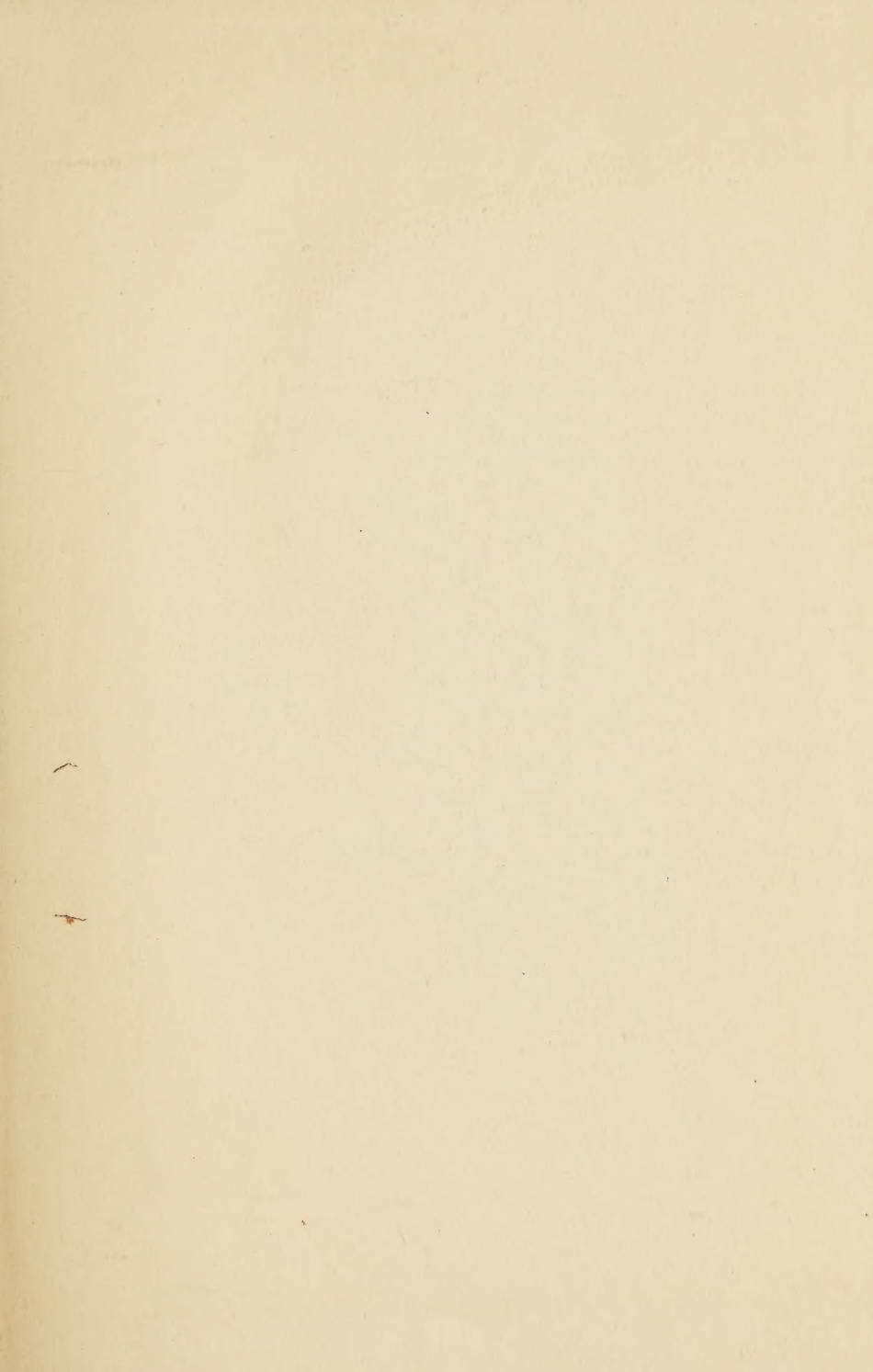
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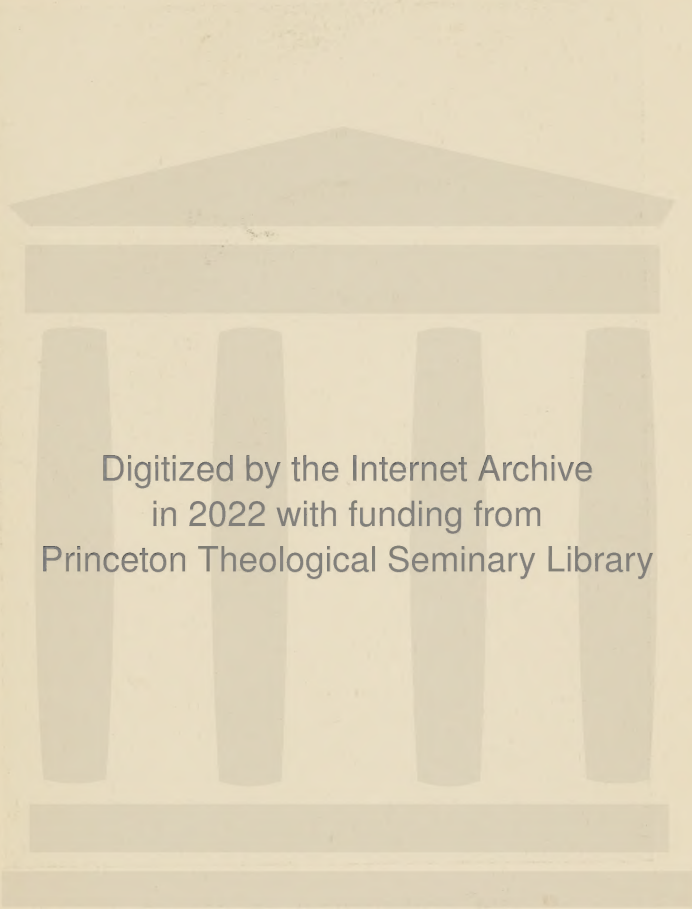
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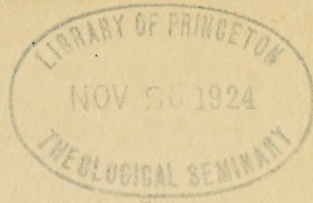




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THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS



# TRUE SPIRITUALISM

BY

C. M. DE HEREDIA, S.J.

AUTHOR OF

"SPIRITISM AND COMMON SENSE"

Above the wonders of Nature are  
the miracles of God, and above the miracles  
of God are the wonders of His grace.



P. J. KENEDY & SONS

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TO  
CHRIST OUR LORD  
AND TO THE  
IMMORTAL SOULS  
OF MY  
FATHER AND MOTHER  
THAT ABIDE WITH HIM

THE AUTHOR





## PROLOGUE

A noble Portuguese, after studying French in his native land, went to Paris. At home, in spite of all his efforts, the French language insistently remained more or less of a mystery to him. Accordingly, on arriving in France, he expressed astonishment amounting almost to indignation that he, who was a nobleman, could speak French so poorly while even the children of France spoke with a natural fluency and ease.

The impression of non-Catholics when Catholics speak of matters of faith is similar to that of the Portuguese visitor in France. They cannot easily understand how we believe and what we believe. They are not well acquainted with the language of faith.

This book is written mainly for Catholics and has its foundation in faith and the Mind of the Church. It may be easily understood by Catholics. But it is probable that those who have not

the faith will understand but little. However, if they are in earnest, I hope that even non-Catholics will find great consolation in this book. Others may, perhaps, indulge in a little quiet, sarcastic laughter. But it will be as the laughter of him who does not understand the language of another.

I have called this book "*True Spiritualism*," in contrast to "*Spiritism*," because we Catholics are "spiritualists" in the true sense of the word. We believe in God, a Spirit; in the Angels, good or bad, that are spirits, too. We are convinced that we have a spiritual soul that lives forever, even after the death of the body.

In "*Spiritism and Common Sense*," we studied the current phenomena of Spiritism, while in the present work we aim to explain man's relations with the angels and the souls of the departed from the Catholic point of view.

If Our Lord wills that this book be profitable to some, I shall be content.

C. M. DE HEREDIA, S.J.

COLLEGE OF ST. FRANCIS XAVIER,  
NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK,  
March 10, 1924

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First Part  
THE DIVINE CORPORATION

*"I believe in . . . the Communion of Saints,"—*  
APOSTLES' CREED.





# TRUE SPIRITUALISM

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## I

### AN OLD TRUTH IN A NEW LIGHT

**I** BELIEVE in the Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints,”—

A friend of mine once said to me:

“Ever since I was a little boy I have always paused when saying the Creed at the line: ‘the Communion of Saints.’ The words were always vague, distant and ineffective for me. I could not realize their full meaning. To-day, my feeling is little different. I know dimly what the Communion of Saints is, but whether it has any strength, any direct influence on life, I have not been able to discover.”

My friend is one of a multitude. His faith is

as strong in him as it was in his mother's heart. His religion is a constant inspiration to him. When he contrasts it with the fact-blind, science-worshipping world of to-day, his faith assumes a fairer beauty and a deeper meaning. Not only does he aim to understand the truths of his religion, but he strives to realize them, to make them living influences in his daily life.

In a series of little fireside chats and winter rambles, I endeavored to explain to him the full beauty and truth of the Communion of Saints. And as I talked, the memories of days long dead came trooping back to me, when this divine association which we call the Communion of Saints first made a deep impression upon me. I saw the fervor and enthusiasm of my friend grow, even as mine had grown, and it gratified me. Not that he, any more than I, had made new discoveries, but that a stronger realization had come upon us.

The merits of Christ and the martyrs, the presence and ministrations of the angels, the sufferings of the souls in purgatory, the prayers and

intercessions of our Blessed Mother and the saints, all came with a deeper, closer meaning. In fleeting moments we caught glimpses of the ecstatic days and nights of St. Augustine, when he recorded in his "Meditations" and "Confessions" those heart-beats that have throbbed through the centuries.

Not, remember, that we were making any discoveries or arriving at any truths one could not find in the nearest catechism. Not, on the other hand, that we were indulging in that common practice of talking, just to discover what we thought. But that as we repeated the words that were the common garb of a common thought, the thought itself seemed to assume a more vivid meaning.

I can illustrate from my own experience. If you had asked me, before I had arrived at the true concept, whether I believed in a guardian angel, I should have instantly replied, "Yes!" I could have recited the prayers to him, could have told you of his help and guidance. But it is only comparatively recently that I have come to realize

he is with me in the noise and crowd of the street-car, that he is over my shoulder even now as I write.

Scores of queries started out here and there in our conversations, like so many frightened rabbits, and they gave new impetus to our rambles. During the past year, for example, the papers were filled with spiritism. Christianity, many declared, had failed. The religion of theories, superstitions and mad fancies was no more. Here was the new religion, the religion of scientific fact. The departed alone knew the truth of the world beyond. And the departed had at last spoken. I read reports of Sir Conan Doyle's lectures in the morning papers, and examined the contents of his book "The New Revelation." And then, grateful for a sense of true understanding, I turned back to the only truth, the Communion of Saints, the real Kingdom of God!

In those many fireside chats and winter rambles, I told my friend of the Communion of Saints. It was well into the spring when I had finished for there were many novel ideas that



## AN OLD TRUTH IN A NEW LIGHT 7

seemed to leap up as I talked to him of that intricate, yet simple and divine, organization. And I promised myself when the cold winds blew again, and there came the scent of burning leaves, I would sit down and write as I had spoken, in the hope that someone might find a little inspiration in my pages, or might see an old truth in a newer light.

## II

### A GREAT PROFIT-SHARING CORPORATION

I SUPPOSE if some of those numerous sects and churches that boast day in and day out of their progressiveness and up-to-dateness had held to the doctrine of the Communion of Saints, they would preach it at every social gathering, propagate it in pamphlets, and advertise it in newspaper and periodical.

One can imagine the headline:

“The Greatest Profit-sharing Corporation in the world!”

And if they were interested in saving souls and eager for the heavenly kingdom instead of the earthly progress of man, they would shout:

“Save your soul for nothing! Admission to this corporation is free. Members partake of the vast resources of the organization and re-

ceive benefits from the richest donors. Come! Join! At last we have discovered the one and only system of communism in existence.”

And so on.

Such advertising would sound very much like “pay a nickel and save your soul” propaganda, but nevertheless, in spite of the error of such advertising which forgets the innate nobility of man and feels impelled to vulgarize every idea to bring it to his level, the announcements would be very true.

For the Communion of Saints is no less than this—a Divine Corporation, a great communism in which all the saints in heaven and all the souls in purgatory and all the children of the Church on earth form one vast family, of which Christ is the head, and participate in all spiritual goods that are in common.

It is a vast benevolent society, beside which the communism attempted in Crete centuries before the coming of Christ, the regime of Lycurgus in Sparta, the dream of Plato in his “Republic,” are petty, inconsequent things. Marx, in his wild-

est chapters, never dreamed of a socialistic commonwealth that should include heaven and earth, God and His Blessed Mother, the angels and saints, and human souls; a commonwealth whose care was the eternal things and whose object was infinite good.

Not alone is it the idea of the early Christians in Jerusalem, who, as is told in the Acts of the Apostles, "had but one heart and soul; neither did any one of them say that, of the things which he possessed, anything was his own; but all things were common to them. And those who had houses and lands sold them and laid the price at the feet of the Apostles who distributed them to every one according to their needs." But it is the idea raised to the heavenly sphere, embracing both planes of existence, enveloping the finite world and entering into the infinite, the idea that makes common property not so much of earthly as spiritual goods.

As far as a comparison is possible, the Communion of Saints is like the ideal profit-sharing corporation.



## PROFIT-SHARING CORPORATION    11

The treasury of such an association would correspond to the common fund of merits, made up of the infinite contribution of Christ on Calvary and applied in the daily sacrifice of the Mass, the incomparable contribution of the Blessed Mother, the donations of the martyrs, saints, and all the faithful on this earth and in heaven. For members of the corporation to contribute to the common fund, it is necessary that they perform good works. For members fully to share in the common fund, there is the obligation to observe the by-laws of the association.

Faith initiates us into membership in this society. It is a gift given by the President. When we receive this gift, we pledge ourselves to abide by the constitution and keep the rules of the society as well as oppose its enemies. Christ is the great President of the society.

Hope is the confidence that we have that the President of the corporation will certainly reward us with ultimate success, and give us the means to obtain it.

Charity is the love we bear the President of the

corporation because of His indisputable goodness, and the love we bear our companions for His sake.

Grace is the gratuitous help from the President of the society, given out of His kindness and generosity to enable us to become at first members of the society, and afterwards, to help us keep the regulations and pay our dues.

Prayer is the means of soliciting help for ourselves and others. It is the method of communication between ourselves and the President.

The faithful are members of this great corporation. When they have committed sin they are dead members, but still retain their membership in the corporation. When in the state of grace, they are living members.

Many benefits accrue because of active membership. By being members in good standing the faithful enjoy not only a higher personal prestige, but also, a position of influence. The better their standing, the easier it is to obtain help from the President. According to their work they profit.

Of the manifold workings and benefits of this

society I shall write somewhat in detail in the following chapters. But I shall not go into the labyrinths of discussion, nor seek to make more plain the obvious. All that is here expressed may be found in the simple answers of the catechism or in the more elaborate treatises of theology. But the living warmth that catechist and theologian must necessarily omit in his argument may find a place in these pages.

The truth of the mightiness and beauty of this great organization, of which you and I and all the faithful are members, is an inspiration, a consolation, a source of courage and joy. When, oft-times, our body is heavily laden and we seem to stagger beneath the burden and grow despondent as we think of our lonely fight for the eternal prize, we remember that great army of which we are soldiers, that great kingdom of which we are citizens, and we arise in pride and new strength. We are not fighting a lonely fight. As we go to battle, angel wings are fluttering unheard above us, the prayers of the faithful on earth and in heaven are about us like messengers guiding and

urging us on, the redundant graces of the martyrs are as food for our weakness, the infinite merits of Christ like new blood rushing through our hearts.

Oh, when we remember our great companionship,—and we are prone to forget,—our littleness and the trivialities of this world are forgotten! We do not shudder at the thought of the Infinite. For, are there not the merits of Christ? And it is with a familiar voice that we appeal to the saints:—Saint Joseph, to teach us to bear the burden of the long day's toil; Saint Augustine, to teach us to love the truth that it may become for us warm and glowing; lowly Saint Francis, to teach us Christian joy even on earth and to know God's hidden loveliness everywhere; Saint Patrick, to teach us courage in exile,—that we call to all the saints, and feel their help around us. And always there is the Blessed Mother with the ladies of her heavenly court, to take our faltering hands and to guide our stumbling feet.



### III

#### THE TREASURY

**I**F you had lived in the days of the martyrs, you might have witnessed, as some holy victim was being dragged through the streets, a Christian dart from a by-way through the exulting captors to whisper a few words into the ear of the one on his way to martyrdom.

“Brother,” you might have heard him say, a little tablet filmed with wax in his hand, “I am a sinner. And Holy Church has decreed that as penance I stand for seven years outside the church, never to enter. Pray, brother, give me of your merits, that my penance may be lifted.”

And the martyr would take the little tablet and scratch on the wax:

“If I shall have the happiness to suffer holy martyrdom, I give to this man enough of my merits to lift his penance.” Then on to the arena

the martyr would move, or to a cauldron of boiling oil, or a cross, or block. If he suffered martyrdom, the sinner would bring his little tablet to the bishop and have his penance lifted.

Had you lived in those days that picture would have taught you how merits are distributed through the Communion of Saints.

To that great storehouse of merits, the saints and martyrs contribute with their superabundant works and prayers. And the faithful, too, with their prayers and good works, likewise contribute. Day after day these merits are being stored and distributed by God through His Church. Into that reservoir go the merits of our alms-giving. Masses for souls in heaven who no longer need our prayers, or for souls in hell who are beyond our prayers, are not offered in vain; the redundant merits are added to the treasury of the Communion of Saints. And all the prayers and good works of the faithful throughout the world, whether they are offered by ourselves for others or for ourselves, or whether they are offered by others for themselves or for us, in

their abundant merits are continually flowing, like a mighty flood, to fill the reservoir.

But, above all, the great donors to that unceasing supply were the Saviour and the Blessed Virgin.

Said Clement VI, speaking dogmatically in the Bull "Unigenitus": "Upon the altar of the Cross Christ shed of His blood not merely a drop, though this would have sufficed, by reason of the union with the Word, to redeem the whole human race, but a copious torrent . . . thereby laying up an infinite treasure for mankind. This treasure he neither wrapped up in a napkin nor hid in a field, but entrusted to Blessed Peter, the key-bearer, and his successors, that they might, for just and reasonable causes, distribute it to the faithful in full or partial remission of the temporal punishment due to sin."

Oh, how would mortal merit the Infinite, were it not for the infinite grace supplied by the sufferings and death of Christ? And to these great benefits are admitted all the faithful. Even the sinners who are not in the state of grace, and

consequently not living but dead members of the Church, can participate.

We say a prayer for some friend, and the petition is granted. But of what avail to move God was that trembling prayer of ours? It often succeeded because it drew strength from the great reservoir of the Communion of Saints.

I shall never forget an experience I had when engaged in parochial work in Southern California. I had been troubled for many days by my fruitless attempts to bring three sinners who had fallen away from the Church back to confession and grace. They were obdurate. They foiled all my efforts, paid no heed to my warnings or pleadings. I prayed long and earnestly, and my prayers seemed in vain.

One night I was thinking of these three, when there came a knock at my door. Outside stood an old woman on whom poverty, suffering and sorrow had left pitiful marks.

“My son is dying, Father,” she wept.

I followed her to a little hovel on the outskirts of the town.

He was only a boy, and a victim of cancer.

I heard his confession . . . he was almost a saint. But it was some time before I could give him Holy Communion.

When at last he was able to receive it, I gave it, and he looked up at me with an expression of heavenly happiness on his face. Then a thought came to me. The poor lad had been suffering terribly, so I hesitated for a moment. But he seemed so happy, that I said to him:

“My child, I want you to do something for me. You are going to die. . . .”

“I know it, Father. But I am not afraid. I am happy . . . happy. . . .”

“And when you die, I want you to ask the good Father in Heaven that three sinners who are avoiding my efforts may come to penance.”

He agreed and seemed even anxious to die, to carry out his mission.

The next morning one of the sinners came to me, penitent. Later in the day, the other two came. I was much surprised, particularly since their change of heart had been so sudden.



Two days later, I met the old mother of the sick boy on the street.

“Father,” she said, approaching me, “will you come to my boy’s funeral?”

“Your boy dead!” I exclaimed, for I did not expect his death so soon. “Why did you not tell me?”

She made some feeble excuse.

“When did he die?” I asked.

She told me. It had been early on the morning of the day when the three who had fallen away from the Church had come to confession.

The boy’s intercession had brought those three souls to penance.

I went to the funeral. The boy was buried in a pauper’s grave, for the poor mother did not have money to pay for one. I tried to have the arrangements changed, but it was too late.

It was a rainy day, and I can never forget watching the body of that boy lowered into his lonely grave. . . . One could think only of his soul in heaven. Indeed, God’s ways are not our ways!

I have often thought how fortunate it is for most of us that there is this great Benevolent Association in the Church, and that we have those who pray for us. Reflection on the vast treasury of merits that are always behind us like a great protecting army, would almost breed presumption, did we not realize, through the teaching of Mother Church what a personal and profound matter is the saving of one's soul.

For him who not only perceives the truth but also realizes it, the Communion of Saints is indeed a great Association, of which we are members. An American in a foreign land has behind him all of America. It is with great pride that he rises for the National Anthem. It is with deep fervor in his heart that he places on his coat the emblem of his country. He is an American! . . . Each of us is a citizen in the Communion of Saints, a soldier in the Kingdom of God, a shareholder in the Divine Corporation. Each of us may ride forth, like a crusader, with pennons flying, meeting the enemy bravely, and heroically facing suffering and death, because we

see how noble is our cause and how great our company.

Those who believe the Communion of Saints is but a chimera, a product of academic discussion, a growth of heterogeneous ideas gathered here and there without any truthful foundation, not only disregard historical fact and evidence but commit the common modern sin of believing themselves and the world enormously larger and more important than they really are. If one were to ask what the outstanding sin of the world to-day is—not that the modern world is universally more sinful than that of centuries in the past—the answer would not be its materialism or its selfishness, but its astounding egoism. What a mighty earth this is! What a mighty people we are! . . . And after all it is only a little insignificant planet, and barely deserving of the name, that whirls unnoticed in space. Should yonder wandering comet ever be permitted to brush us even gently in passing, in an instant all our great works, our railroads, our skyscrapers, our canals, and our bridges, power-plants and

laboratories would be but scattered dust drifting aimlessly down beneath the farthest star.

But how natural, how beautiful, is the Communion of Saints to him who realizes he is but an atom before the smallest star, that his life is outlived a thousand times by that star, and yet is so great that he can enter heaven and eternal life! To him, the Communion of Saints is the power of the only thing that matters,—the spirit. Earth is but a preparation for the kingdom of heaven.

“Seek first the Kingdom of God and its justice, and all other things will be added to you.”

He clearly sees the necessity of outside help . . . and prayer.

There comes to my mind a story I heard when I was in Spain.

In a little village lived a famous toreador. One day the parish priest came upon the bull-fighter's mother praying in the chapel. Her head was bowed and her lips moved incessantly.

When she saw the priest, she went to him and pleaded:

"Father, please pray for my boy. He is to fight to-morrow. The bull is one of the fiercest, and I fear he will be gored."

The priest promised the mother that he would remember, and went out and left her in the chapel.

Outside, under a tree, carelessly smoking a cigarette, was the famous toreador himself.

"Why aren't you in there, praying for your life?" asked the priest.

The toreador watched the clouds lazily sailing by. And then with a puff of his cigarette,

"Oh, don't worry, Father, I'll kill the bull."

The priest was amazed at the other's self-assurance.

"How do you know that?" he queried, quickly.

The toreador, with his drowsy eyes still on the languid clouds, returned,

"The bull hasn't any mother to pray for him!"



## IV

### MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

“**N**OTHING is impossible when we Catholics pray with faith. . . . We have behind us the promise of Christ and the help of all His saints.”

These are the words with which Admiral de Albuquerque in his time was wont to console his friends.

And there came a day when the famous sailor, the conqueror of India, had the truth of those words brought home to him well.

When he was crossing the Indian Sea at the head of the Portuguese navy, a great hurricane arose. It leaped upon them suddenly like some furious monster and raged over the waters. The sea boiled like a cauldron. The sailors prepared to die.

And then the great admiral, with his firm faith, and confidence in the great Communion, took a little baby, recently baptized, in his arms, and, holding him up towards the awful skies, exclaimed with fervor:

“My Lord, do not look at us sinners who have offended Thee and do not deserve Thy mercy, but look at this child who has just entered Thy Church through baptism. He is innocent and a member of Thy mystical body . . . For his sake, O Lord, spare us sinners.”

And suddenly the wind ceased and the sea was quiet. And all knelt down and with grateful hearts thanked God for His intervention.

“A story!” you say. But it is not a story. It is a fact. And your experience, if you pause to consider, and the experiences of all the faithful would make a vast treasure-house of instances of divine intervention. It is a rare life among the faithful that at sometime does not show a marvelous example of the working of the grace of God. What father, mother, sister, son, brother, daughter, priest, nun, cannot, if they would consider,

recall some instance of the fruit of prayer and the working of the overflowing graces of the Communion of Saints? Sometimes it may be seen only by looking backward over many years. Sometimes it may be seen only in a fleeting minute, at death. Often it may never be seen, because one never looks. But it is there. And if some industrious investigator, some laborious compiler, who spends a long life gathering fables from all the centuries to prove the materialism of life, should spend his time collecting instances of this overflowing grace, not only among princes and kings but among the humble country people and the lowly city dweller, what an inspiring work that collection would be!

But the skepticism of the modern world will label these manifestations of Divine Providence as "stories," "fiction." Science adopts the hallucinations of mediums as a foundation for investigation and a stepping-stone to progress. But the absolute scientific truth of the existence of the miracles of Lourdes it passes by with indifference and an air of incredulity.

It has been alleged oftentimes that the Church has taught that in this world there is nothing but misery, and that she is not for this life but for the next. Well do we know how erroneous that is! As the soul is greater than the body even in this life, so does it follow that the pleasures of that soul are greater than the pleasures of the body. It is the Church which teaches us how to be happiest in this life and happiest in the next. The philosophy that reduces the world's play-things to their proper perspective and makes man at once great in the accomplishments of earth and at the same time divinely indifferent to them, is hers. Few who criticize the Church in the matter of her philosophy of earthly happiness can be familiar with the moral virtue of the enjoyment of life,—*Eutrapelia*,—as St. Thomas puts it.

If earthly joys were all, the Catholic, with the doctrine of the golden mean of moderation, would make the most of them. If happiness consisted of an ultimate carelessness for death and the troubles of the world, the Catholic, with his heaven-waiting stoicism, would obtain it in full-

est measure. If the most contented man were the man with the greatest number of pleasurable ideas, then the Catholic, with the great storehouse of beautiful thoughts and images that the Church has gathered through the centuries, would be that man. If the highest joys are the mystical joys, the Catholic has a rich ocean of mysticism in which he can discover pearls untold. If the highest joys are the simple homely joys, the Catholic has a reservoir of truths that begin with the simple and homely teaching and example of Nazareth. No hedonist, no æsthete, however rapturous his pagan worship of beauty, can equal the Catholic even in pursuit of earthly happiness.

But immeasurably beyond these sources of joy, the Catholic has his firm hope in the everlasting happiness of heaven. He has his trust in a God who loved man so much that He came to earth and died for him. The light of Paradise is in his eyes. The beauty of God illuminates his soul. The caresses of his Heavenly Father are on him. And he has his belief in the power and companionship of the Communion of Saints.



In the words of the brave old admiral,  
“Nothing is impossible when we Catholics pray  
with faith. . . . We have behind us the promise  
of Christ and the help of all His saints.”

## V

### ELECTION TO MEMBERSHIP

COME back with me somewhat over four hundred years ago.

The church of Santa Maria la Antigua in Spain was hung with rich draperies and bedecked with regal magnificence.

Outside the door, in his robes, stood the famous Cardinal Tavera, archbishop of Toledo, the most prominent churchman after the Pope.

Up to the doors of the church came a royal procession. In the suite was a lady-in-waiting, carrying in her arms a new-born child.

"What dost thou ask of the Church of God?" asked the waiting Cardinal of a prince walking by the side of the Imperial child.

"Faith," answered the prince.

"And what doth faith avail thee?" asked the Cardinal.

“Life everlasting,” answered the prince.

“If then thou desirest to enter into life, keep the commandments.”

And then, bending over the little child, the Cardinal said:

“Depart from him, unclean spirit, and give place unto the Holy Ghost.”

Making the sign of the Cross over the little figure, he continued:

“Receive the sign of the cross both upon thy forehead and also upon thy heart, take unto thee the faith of the heavenly precepts, and in thy manners be such, that thou mayest now be the temple of God.”

Then placing his hand upon the head of the infant, he repeated the beautiful prayer asking the Lord “to break all the bonds of Satan wherewith the infant is tied and to open to him the gate of His mercy.”

And then, after putting a few grains of salt on the tongue of the child and praying as he did so, the Cardinal in a solemn voice exorcised the unclean spirit, commanding it in the name of the

Father, Son and Holy Ghost not to snare the child. . . .

“Therefore, accursed devil,” he prayed, “acknowledge thy sentence, and give honor to the living and true God; give honor to Jesus Christ, His Son, and to the Holy Ghost; and depart from this servant of God, because God, our Lord Jesus Christ, hath vouchsafed to call him to His holy Grace and benediction, and to the font of baptism.”

The Cardinal prayed again, and placing the stole over the child, said:

“Enter into the Temple of God that thou mayest have part with Christ unto life everlasting.”

The Imperial suite entered the church.

After the recitation of the Apostles' Creed and the Our Father, the Cardinal prayed again, exorcising the unclean spirit—commanding him to leave the child.

Then, turning towards the prince who was godfather and answered in the name of the child, he asked:

“Dost thou renounce Satan?”

"I do renounce him," answered the prince.

"And all his works?"

"I do renounce them."

"And all his pomps?"

"I do renounce them."

Then the Cardinal anointed the child, saying:

"I anoint thee with the oil of salvation in Jesus Christ Our Lord, that thou mayest have life everlasting."

"Amen," answered the vast crowd.

Then with great solemnity the Cardinal asked:

"Dost thou believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth?"

"I believe," replied the prince.

"Dost thou believe in Jesus Christ, His Only Son, Our Lord, Who was born and suffered for us?"

"I believe."

"Dost thou believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?"

"I do believe."

"Wilt thou be baptized?"



“I will.”

Then the Cardinal, pouring the baptismal water over the child’s head, said:

“Philip. . . . I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”  
. . . . And so, Prince Philip, later Philip II of Spain, was baptized.

That day was the day of his admission into the Church of God. He received the faith and the grace of God. And on that day, he was initiated into the Communion of Saints.

All of us may not have Cardinals to pour the baptismal water, or princes to stand as our god-fathers. But we are all given the same faith just as fully and with just as much rejoicing in heaven. And we all, on that day when we are received into the faith, are given the gift of grace, however humble we may be and however lowly our surroundings. In other words, by this ceremony we, too, are initiated as members of the great Communion of Saints.

And what great gifts those are—faith, and grace!

Later, I shall speak of them both more fully.

But to-night, as I write here in the autumn dusk, I can see a little graveyard through the trees with its shining white headstones in regular rows. To many, in the melancholy of the dying year, those silent stones might speak of sorrow and fear at the cold immobility of death. But to me they bring joy, hope, confidence, for I know that the souls of those who sleep beneath the stones there are now in the other world, and have entered into a more complete membership in the Communion of Saints.

We trust that they see now, face to face, the Leader of the great Community whose death opened the way to Paradise. Perhaps they have met those blessed ones whose overflowing merits enriched their earthly lives, and whose prayers were for them encouragement and strength. They have stood, perhaps, in the Divine Splendor, recognizing at last those angels who while on earth stood by them unseen, who guided them, triumphed with them, and gloried in their sacrifices!

It is the little graveyard out there, scarcely

distinguishable in the deepening dusk, that brings home more fully the joy, the strength and the loveliness that is part of that great spiritual organization—the Communion of Saints!

## VI

### INSTALLATION-GIFT

A few years ago, in a new book, an author had his characters discuss among themselves what was the greatest good that could be lost in life.

One said it was loss of eyesight, because it shut one up for life in the opaque darkness of a solitary cell. Another, that it was loss of mind, for life then for the loser was worse than death. Another said it was loss of friendship, because that brought a sorrow for which there was no consolation, and made a gap in life that could not be filled.

But I have often thought that none of them had found the greatest loss in life. For the greatest tragedy of life is the loss of faith.

In baptism, we are questioned:

“What dost thou ask of the Church of God?”

“Faith” is the answer.

“And what doth faith avail thee?” is asked.

“Life everlasting.”

And with the loss of faith comes the greatest loss—beside which all others are as nothing—the loss of God and of everlasting life. It is faith that makes us members of the Church, of the mystical body of Christ, and partakers of the resources of the Communion of Saints. Faith alone will not secure salvation. But without faith one cannot be saved.

“He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned.” (Mark, xvi, 16.)

Faith is the believing what God has revealed because God has revealed it. It is not an overflowing of fervor, or a rush of emotions directed toward the Divine or simply a trust in God or confidence in His goodness. As the catechism says, “Faith is a virtue infused by God into our souls, by which we believe without doubting, all



those things which God has revealed and proposes by His Church for our belief."

Faith is not some amazing gymnastic feat of the combined faculties of the human soul. Nor is it a mighty act of sheer will. It is, in the words of Pope Pius X: . . . "not a blind religious feeling, issuing forth from the secret places of subconsciousness . . . but a genuine assent of intellect to truth received outwardly through hearing; by which assent we believe those things to be true that God, a personal Being, our Creator and Lord, has spoken, borne witness to, and revealed, and all because of the authority of God, who is supremely truthful."

Your ultra-modernist will stand aghast in open-mouth amazement at a Catholic's profession of faith. And yet his whole life is bound in a network of assents of his ordinary human intelligence, held together by his credence in human testimony.

Why should he be so dumbfounded at credence in divine testimony? Almost all of his knowledge is based on human testimony. His own

immediate experience, must, because of his insignificance, be so limited that through that experience he can know but little. He knows of the existence of New York or San Francisco because, we will assume, he has been there. But in the existence of the land of Thibet, the stream called the River Nile, the Behring Straits, or the city of Calcutta, and the nature of these places, he believes purely on human testimony. And those are simply questions of geography.

The acceptance of ordinary human testimony is the foundation stone of all of our history. If each of us believed only those incidents of the Great War which we ourselves saw and took a part in, how little would be our store of knowledge of the war. Even the soldier who fought at St. Mihiel must learn by testimony what was going on at the Somme. The historians themselves must rely for their records on documentary testimony of men. All past history is compiled on the same basis.

In your home, you take the testimony of your family for countless things. In science,

you constantly take the testimony of text books and scientists. You put your faith in your physician, in your lawyer. Recount the facts in your personal experience and you will discover that ninety-nine per cent of them are based on human testimony. You take the testimony of newspapers, of magazines. The score of yesterday's baseball game in another city you learn from the word of one who was there.

Your ultra-modernist is, himself, an out-and-out believer in human testimony, else his life would be a bedlam of insane doubts, endless inconsequent questionings and annihilating disbeliefs. Human testimony is a source of true knowledge. What is essential is that the one giving testimony be truthful and knows what he is talking about. Under these conditions, to deny the truth is to ruin all moral certitude. And knowledge through the testimony of another is, however you may put it, however you may quibble over it, simply and obviously "knowledge by faith."

Now, what does the Catholic do when he be-

believes what God has revealed because God has revealed it? In human faith he believes a wise and honest man. In divine faith he believes Him who is infinitely wise and infinitely truthful. He cannot go to Calcutta, so he takes the testimony of a wise and honest man in Calcutta who tells him of the journey there, the route, the joys and hardships of the journey; who tells him of the city itself, its beauties, its laws and government. So, while on this earth he cannot go to heaven, yet he believes the testimony of an infinitely wise and infinitely honest God.

But has God given this testimony to man?

This testimony is contained in the Sacred Scriptures and Tradition. Therein is the word of God.

But how does he know that these revelations are the word of God?

Suppose he chances upon a document alleged to date from the twelfth century. It is interesting to him, but he, of himself, cannot tell whether or not it is genuine. What is the sane and logical thing to do? Go to an expert, a man familiar

with the intrinsic evidence of such documents. Or suppose he found a painting in his garret. He has a suspicion that it is a work by Whistler, let us say. What does he do? He goes to some man who is a connoisseur, to some expert who was intimate with Whistler and familiar with his work. The expert tells him that it is a genuine painting by the artist, a bona fide document. And he believes.

Similarly, he wants to know about the word of God. "I wonder if this is so or not?" he asks himself. "Is some of it true, or none of it?" "Is some of it fictitious, or all of it?" What does he do? He goes to that expert body whose care it has been from the first hour of its existence to receive, verify and guard the things of God. That body tells him that God has revealed Himself to man, and this and that, and no other, is the word of God. And now his doubt is cleared. He does not, in the face of the testimony of the Church, whose particular province is for that very object, cast aside all of Revelation, nor reject some of it and accept other parts of it, nor



endeavor to interpret it according to his own whim, fancy or vacillating mood, or to suit a changing need. The Church takes the burden that is entirely too big for his strength off his shoulders. He says gratefully, "Let the Church take care of that; it is her business, not mine."

And that is why in the catechism it is affirmed that we believe those things which God has revealed and *proposes by His Church for our belief*. *What* to believe is the care of God's appointed Church. *To believe* is the obligation of a Christian.

The scientific method of the Catholic in this matter of faith is in strange antithesis to the unscientific methods of the modern materialistic evolutionist who builds so largely on supposition. Yet no one laughs at the man who bases his belief on evidence which is missing, whose whole system of thought is based on a gap that divides.

In *human* faith, man need only know that the witness knows what he is talking about, and that he is truthful. But in the matter of *divine* faith,

there is need of more. To believe anything that God has revealed, because He has revealed it, is an act of supernatural faith. And for mortal to make a supernatural act requires the help of God. The supernatural, by definition, is beyond the powers of nature, and, accordingly, impossible for us to attain by our own natural powers alone.

It is as if, after endeavoring vainly to see the rings of Saturn with the naked eye, some good friend put into our hands a powerful telescope and by its aid suddenly the rings of Saturn were made clear. So, we, who are unable through natural powers alone to perform a supernatural act, are given in baptism the virtue or habit of faith, in conjunction with hope and charity; and in addition, the grace of God, the "supernatural gift by which we become children of God and heirs to His glory." It is this faith received in baptism that initiates us into the membership of the Communion of Saints, and it is this grace that enables us to be shareholders in the common stock of spiritual goods.

Remember, this virtue of faith is a gift of

God. He wants us to become members of the mystical body of Christ, and He knows that by our own powers alone we cannot enter. Remember, also, that when in baptism we become children of God and members of the Communion of Saints we renounce Satan and all his works and pomps; just as an alien in America, for example, who seeks citizenship, must renounce his allegiance to any other land.

When I notice Catholics attending meetings of those who make a religion of Oriental magic and diabolical superstitions, I wonder if they have forgotten the King to whom they offered their allegiance in baptism!

Faith is a priceless treasure. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." (Heb. xi:6.) The Church realizes this. And she realizes how easy it is for a person to lose his faith. Too often has she seen the carelessly sown seed of doubt spring into a poisoned flower. Too often has she seen apparently small errors in belief blaze into great conflagrations that reduce to smoke and ashes the once-noble edifice of the

faith of thousands. She knows the faithful are forever skirting a precipice, and that Satan is ever there, a lion lurking for its prey. And that is why she is so rigid on matters of faith. When it comes to the priceless possession, that God-given gift of faith, she stands firm and unyielding. There is no wile that can win her, no reward that can shake her, no force that can sway her, from her determined path. She knows that in matters of faith there can be no bartering. It is "lose all" or "gain all." Her children, at times, when Satan is whispering sweet words in their ears, are angry with her. But the day will come when they will be grateful for her noble stand. She acts, then, like a human mother; she is a jealous mother and will fight to the end.

For one to lose the shining virtues of faith or hope, it is necessary for him to commit a sin expressly against these God-given gifts. He may commit a mortal sin, but keep the habits of faith and hope. Then, although he is a dead member of the Church, he is still a participator in some of the benefits of the Communion. But

when a person commits a sin against faith, he ceases, there and then, to be a true member of the Communion of Saints. A sinner against the commandments has always some chance of assistance by the prayers, or good works, or superabundant merits of some other member of the Communion. But when a person commits a mortal sin against faith, he is no longer a participant in the common spiritual goods. God may have mercy on him and give him back his faith. But there is no obligation. Faith is a gift, and if that gift is not twice-given, such a soul is lost forever.

To remain a member of the Communion of Saints and keep the title to everlasting life, one must hold firmly to his faith. But faith alone will not suffice; it requires faith with the keeping of the commandments, faith kept alive by charity, prayer, good works, and the sacraments.

Once, when I was in Rome, a friend of mine from boyhood came to visit me. He had with him his little son. The name of the boy and his father was Lawrence. Late one afternoon we



went together to the Church of St. Lawrence to pray.

Before the relic of the great martyr, the father bade his son kneel down to pray. And he himself knelt down beside him, as I thought, also in prayer.

That night, at the hotel, we were chatting together, and I remarked how happy I was to have seen him so fervently at prayer.

His face suddenly became very serious, and without a word he led me out onto a balcony where no one could hear what we said. He stopped, and turned slowly to me:

“Father,” he said, “I have lost my faith.”

I looked at him in amazement, and he went on:

“I am very unhappy. I believe in nothing. I want to believe but I cannot. That is why I want my boy never to lose his faith. It is terrible, Father. I act as a Catholic when I am with him, because I would rather die than let him know. For never would I want him to be as unhappy as I am . . . I want to believe, and I cannot. . . .”

And then he told me his sorrow. And I thought

how true were the words of a great Catholic writer:

“If faith were not the first of the Christian virtues, it would always be the greatest of consolations. It is both.”

## VII

### THE PLEDGE

**A** CHRISTIAN, to make an act of divine faith, needs the supernatural habit of faith, and, for the object of that act, a matter revealed by God Himself. Just as to play a sonata of Beethoven, one needs the habit acquired through years of practice, and the master's music. If we have not the supernatural help, we cannot make the supernatural act; and, even if we have the habit, and have not a truth revealed by God, we cannot make a supernatural act of faith.

I cannot, for example, make an act of supernatural faith in the existence of Thibet. I may have the habit of faith, but it is not God Who has revealed the existence of Thibet.

Sometimes it is difficult to know just what in particular has been revealed by God. In these cases we turn to the Church for assistance.

Certainly all that is contained in Scripture and Tradition (and so, proposed by the Church) is revealed by God. But it is the Church who can tell us what we *must* believe by making an act of faith and what we *must not* believe.

There are many things about which we are not obliged to make an explicit act of faith. For instance, it is revealed by God in the Book of Genesis that Adam had two sons, Cain and Abel. If I wish, I may make an act of supernatural faith, saying, "I believe that Adam had two sons, Cain and Abel, because God has revealed it." If I have the habit or virtue of faith, this will be an act of supernatural faith. But, as is very obvious, there is no need of making such an act. I may, or I may not, as I wish.

But if I declared, "I do not believe that Adam had two sons, Cain and Abel," such a declaration would be an act against faith. God has revealed that Adam had two sons, and this is as true as that Christ is God. The testimony of God is the same, no matter what it bears witness to. And so, we are obliged to believe all that God has re-

vealed, but we are not obliged to make a special act of faith in regard to every item and in support of every detail. We are obliged only not to *disbelieve*, for such disbelief would be equivalent to a denial of the veracity of God.

The Church tells us just what things we must believe, and just what truths on which we are *obliged* to make an act of faith. To some of these truths we give the name "dogma of faith." For, to be saved, it is not enough for a grown person merely to have the virtue or habit of faith. It is absolutely necessary that he, or she, exercise it. Some of the dogma we have to believe explicitly, for they are absolutely necessary for salvation. On others we have to make an act of faith because the Church commands us to do so. These dogma are contained in the Apostles' Creed. Those matters that are not revealed by God, and not contained in the holy scriptures or treasured by tradition, we cannot believe by supernatural faith.

Then what about the revelations of the saints?



The answer is very simple.

However well authenticated a *private revelation* may be, we cannot make an act of *supernatural faith* on it. And the reason is simple—God has not made that revelation to us.

But can we believe in private revelations?

We can, by an act of natural faith, just as we believe in the existence of Calcutta. The proofs must be so reasonable as to afford no objection.

Here, again, enters the Church with her maternal solicitude.

To her Christ entrusted the divine treasure of revelation. She realizes full well the seriousness and sanctity of her trust. And accordingly, she is extremely careful in what she tells her children to believe or not to believe. She is infallible when she declares that a certain truth is contained in the treasures of revelation. And from God she has a special mission and special graces to enable her to direct her children. When the Church, after a long and careful investigation gives her approbation to the revelations of some of the saints, it does not mean that such revelations are

infallibly true, and that we must believe them as coming from God, but simply that on the grounds of human testimony, they can be believed in a pious way. Such, for instance, are the revelations of St. Margaret Alacoque.

Some revelations are tolerated by the Church. She neither approves nor condemns. In them she finds nothing that is dangerous to the faith or morals of her children, and she leaves it to the common sense and ordinary judgment of the faithful whether or not they wish to believe. Such are the revelations of Catherine Emeric.

There are, however, other revelations disapproved, and others condemned by the Church, because in them is found something that is dangerous to faith or morals, or otherwise injurious.

So solicitous is the Church for her children that she will not permit even the transcendent holiness of one of those children to move her to a decision that might, as time goes on, be a cause for misunderstanding, and afford a ground for doubt. She knows how incomparably precious is the gift of faith.

And, sometimes, when I meet a youth whose tiny brain has been crammed with petty facts and to whom the joy of true wisdom is unknown, and hear him rant in his egotism that he has risen above the tangled superstitions of faith, (How they do like those phrases! As if in their bitterness and injustice they found some opiate for a secret unrest!) I feel like crying out, "You do not know what you have lost. And, alas! unless God's mercy descend upon your soul again, you never in this life will know." There's the pity of it. Those, oftentimes, who have wilfully lost their faith speak as if they had freed themselves from shackles, when, in reality, they have estranged themselves from God who is everlasting happiness, and have cut themselves off from the greatest earthly source of strength and inspiration. I think if someone had only told them of the greatness and beauty of the gift they possessed, they might have avoided the carelessness that lost it to them forever.

When I hear them expatiating upon their superstitious beliefs in their own greatness, in

science, in material progress, I can think only how small the earth is and how little are they to be imprisoned by its barriers. Never do they seem to greet the Infinite, in the multitudinous expressions of faith, in the beautiful solitude and communion of prayer, in the glorious prospect of the magnificent sunset sky, in the loveliness of flowers, throbs of music, or the silent grandeur of the midnight stars. They seem so petty, so futile, so vain. And I have thought that those nearest to Truth are the very simple and the very profound. There is the mighty Augustine with that colossal mind of his and that great heart, pouring his soul out in the humble fervor of his meditations. And there is the gigantic St. Thomas of Aquinas, austere, almost invincible, bowing down in simple humility to write the "Tantum Ergo." And there are thousands of humble peasants and dwellers in the city praying, working, believing,—countless unknown, uncanonized saints of the great Communion.

Shortly after the ill-fated *Titanic* was sunk, this little story came to my ears:

Among those of the crew that lost their lives was a boy. Some weeks after the disaster, the captain of a great trans-Atlantic liner at dock in New York City received a visit from a poor old woman. Approaching the captain, with tears she said:

“Captain, my dear child is buried in the ocean, and his grave has no cross upon it. I have come to ask you to put this crucifix on his resting place.”

The captain looked into her pleading eyes with pity. He thought to himself that she must be mad. She read his glance, and, taking a small metal cross from her bosom, she continued:

“No, captain, my grief has not made me mad. What I ask of you is reasonable. Are you not going to cross the ocean soon? And on your trip are you not going near the route taken by the *Titanic*?”

The captain replied that was true.

“Then, this is all I ask. When your ship goes by the spot, take this little crucifix and drop it



into the waters, and the Guardian Angel of my child will take care of it."

There were tears in the eyes of the sturdy captain as he took the little cross from the mother. He promised her he would do what she asked.

And who is there that can deny but what, as that tiny emblem of God's love for man fell into the waters and drifted deeper and deeper into the darkening depths, there came the flash of angel wings as a hand caught the falling cross and laid it lovingly on a boy's body that swayed to and fro in the subterranean darkness?

## VIII

### HOLDINGS OF EACH MEMBER

**D**ULL and dark is the life of the man who has no aspirations.

There are no sudden glimpses of a fair reward to hasten his lagging steps, no sweet distant music to comfort his despondency, no flash of a friendly star to bring him renewed confidence and strength.

Jean Paul Richter tells how disheartening would be the dark blue vault of heaven were it not dotted with the tiny lanterns of the stars. Man would shrink beneath that unbroken darkness and crouch as if he were carrying its vast gloom like a heavy burden on his back. It is heaven's distant lights that draw man's soul, like magnets, that lift it up and lighten his heavy burden. He feels as if at times he were treading

the trembling air and already taking "the kindred kisses of the stars."

Life without hope would be the dark expanse of the heavens without the stars.

Hope! Poets have written winged lyrics to its comforting inspiration. Artists have visualized and sought to materialize its beauty on canvas. Orators have endeavored to confine its grandeur in thoughts that march to resounding sentences, vibrant with a martial music, compelling with a manly strength. Beside the intimate experience of Hope's beauty, strength, and inspiration, the fairest accomplishments of man are vain and feeble. It is the solitary soul that has Hope's comfort—that alone may know Hope's infinite grandeur.

Faith is "the beginning of human salvation."

Hope keeps us moving towards the goal.

God is as good as His word. He promised Abraham He would multiply his descendants like the stars of heaven. And He fulfilled His promise. He promised Moses He would help him in delivering his people, "For I will stretch forth

my hand and will strike Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst of them. . . .” (Ex. iii, 20.) And it was done. When a soul enters His Church, He promises that soul life everlasting. And He will fulfill His word. All He asks is that we, too, keep our promises. To reveal to us His desire that we dwell in heaven with Him, He bestows on us in baptism the supernatural virtue of hope.

“Hope is a supernatural virtue divinely infused into our souls, by which with certain confidence we expect the eternal happiness and the means conducive thereto, through the assistance of God.”

God is infinitely truthful and infinitely wise. He also is infinitely powerful and infinitely faithful. He has promised to make us happy forever, and He alone has the power to fulfill this promise. We are certain He will fulfill His promises because He is infinitely faithful.

The truth and wisdom of God are the foundation of faith. The power and fidelity of God are

the foundation of hope. As we cannot make a supernatural act of faith without the help of God, so we cannot make a supernatural act of hope without this same divine assistance.

Faith is not enough for eternal life.

Without good works our faith is vain. For salvation, we must keep the commandments; but we cannot keep the commandments permanently without the grace of God. We know that God is constantly furnishing us with this grace. He does so with divine generosity, in the sacraments. And we know that we are not alone in the fight to gain heaven. As members of the Communion of Saints, we have the prayers of innumerable good souls. We have the intercession of the saints in heaven who are watching us. We can partake of the infinite merits of Christ that overflow daily in the sacrifice of the Mass. This help and encouragement are like sun and rain to the flower of our hope. Day by day it will grow, if we constantly keep in mind how God is fulfilling His promise of giving to us the means to eternal life.



The beautiful prayer of Fr. de la Colombière, S.J., comes to my mind as I write:

My God, I believe most firmly that Thou watchest over all who hope in Thee, and that we can want for nothing when we rely upon Thee in all things; therefore I am resolved for the future to have no anxieties, and to cast all my cares upon Thee. *"In peace in the self-same I will sleep and I will rest; for Thou, O Lord, singularly hast settled me in hope."*

Men may deprive me of my worldly goods and of honors; sickness may take from me my strength and the means of serving Thee; I may even lose Thy grace by sin; but my trust shall never leave me. I will preserve it to the last moment of my life, and the powers of hell shall seek in vain to wrest it from me. *"In peace in the self-same I will sleep and I will rest."*

Let others seek happiness in their wealth, in their talents: let them trust to the purity of their lives, the severity of their mortifications, to the number of their good works, the fervor of their prayers; as for me, O my God, in my very confidence lies all my hope. *"For Thou, O Lord, singularly hast settled me in hope."*

This confidence can never be vain. "No one has hoped in the Lord and has been confounded."

I am assured, therefore, of my eternal happiness, for I firmly hope for it, and all my hope is in Thee. "*In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; let me never be confounded.*"

I know, alas! I know but too well that I am frail and changeable; I know the power of temptation against the strongest virtue. I have seen stars fall from heaven, and pillars of the firmament totter; but these things alarm me not. While I hope in Thee I am sheltered from all misfortune, and I am sure that my trust shall endure, for I rely upon Thee to sustain this unfailing hope.

Finally, I know that my confidence cannot exceed Thy bounty, and that I never shall receive less than I have hoped for from Thee. Therefore I hope that Thou wilt sustain me against my evil inclinations; that Thou wilt protect me against the most furious assaults of the evil one, and that Thou wilt cause my weakness to triumph over my most powerful enemies. I hope that Thou wilt never cease to love me, and that I shall love Thee unceasingly.

*“In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; let me never be confounded.”*

Hope, alone, seems a self-regarding virtue, for it has its foundation in the love of our own happiness. We know that God has promised life everlasting and all the means to obtain it. So, we look towards life everlasting, and if we keep the commandments it is because we realize that this is the way to heaven.

When, in the state of grace we perform some good work, aside from the merit of that good work which is for ourselves alone, there is another value, satisfactory and impetrative, which, if we wish, we may transfer to others for their benefit. Now, if mortals possessed hope alone, the inclination would be to be parsimonious and store up all our merits for ourselves. And accordingly, with hope alone, the Communion of Saints would seem a somewhat imperfect society.

But hope is not alone. We have charity, the greatest of all the theological virtues, a supernatural habit by which we love God above all

things and our neighbor for God's sake. It is through charity that we dread sin, not only because it means the loss of heaven and the punishments of hell, but because it offends God who is all good and worthy of all love. It is with charity that we incline to help our neighbors as we help ourselves. Hence it is charity that is the heart of the Communion of Saints. Hope and faith will pass with the passing of this earthly life, but charity will burn as incense before God forever.

## IX

### MEMBERSHIP DUES

**F**AITH initiates us into the membership of the Communion of Saints.

Hope is the common trust of the members of the Communion of Saints that God will not only give them eternal life but also the means to obtain it.

Charity is the common love of the members for one another and for God Himself.

Grace makes us living members of the Communion of Saints.

Prayer is the way of communication between the members of the Communion.

Merits form the treasury of the Communion of Saints.

The Infinite Contributor to the treasury has been our Saviour, on Calvary, and in the daily sacrifice of the Mass. Then, there are the incom-



parable merits of the Blessed Virgin, and the superabundant satisfactions of all the martyrs and saints, and of all the faithful, living and dead.

When one in the state of grace performs a good work it results in his obtaining certain merits. Of these merits, a part acts as a personal reward, increasing the sanctifying grace in one's own soul and storing up greater glory for the individual in heaven. A second part goes to give him a place of greater influence in the eyes of God, adds more power to his prayers, and, hence, affords him a greater possibility of obtaining the object of his prayers. And a third part, satisfactory rather than meritorious, serves to pay for the temporal punishment due to his sins, and, if he wishes, for the temporal punishment due to the sins of others. He may, as some of the faithful do, wish to have none of this go to obliterate the temporal punishment due to his sins but that all shall go for the benefit of others. Or he may desire that what is sufficient to atone for his own sins shall go to that end, and all, over and above, may help to compensate for the sins of others.

When one commits a mortal sin, there are two effects,—an eternal punishment and a temporal punishment. The eternal punishment may be eradicated only by God's grace. The temporal punishment may be remitted through the converted sinner's own works or through the satisfactions of other members of the Communion of Saints which are donated to the common fund in the spirit of charity.

It is as if a man were fined fifty dollars. Through some good work he obtains five hundred dollars, we will say. By this good work he adds to his own personal prestige,—people admire him. And in the performance of the deed he himself becomes a stronger and a better man. Secondly, through his act he becomes more respected in the community. He has proved himself a worthy man. He makes many friends and gains the favor of his associates. And, thirdly, through his act he has acquired sufficient money to pay off his fine. He pays the fine of fifty dollars, and if he so wishes, he may use the remaining four hundred and fifty dollars in paying the fines of his

friends who are in a similar predicament. Of course he may not be so charitably inclined.

We find many analogies in life. For instance, take the case of an actor who makes a great success of his work. He acquires by his acting, first of all, a wide personal reputation. And perhaps his own nature becomes fuller and more perfect by the practice of his art. Secondly, he gains a multitude of friends and admirers. Through them his influence is greater, and hence he is in a position to exercise that influence. And, thirdly, he receives a salary and accumulates a large amount of money. Now, he cannot bestow on another his reputation and the perfection of his art, for that is personal. But he can use his influence to assist relatives and friends. Likewise, he can employ the money he accumulates to pay his own debts or the debts of others, according to his inclination.

So it is with the good works of the faithful in the state of grace.

These good works are of many kinds; such as prayer, almsgiving, self-denial, or participation in the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

It is well never to forget that we are members of the Communion of Saints. We may not be saints, in the ecclesiastical conception of the word, but we are all in the Communion of Saints. We are all called to be saints. (Cf. I Thess. iv:7.) We have been sanctified by baptismal grace. And many of the members of our great community have already arrived at a great sanctity. It is well, every day, to dedicate our works, our sacrifices and our prayers, alone or in a group, or at the sacrifice of the Mass, not only to ourselves but also to the great treasury of our society, that they may be awarded to fellow-members who, like us, are struggling on this earth or suffering in purgatory. For we, too, are participators in the merits which others have bestowed on us.

It is a glorious and inspiring thought, that of our kinship and our common treasure. We may *receive* of its benefits, and we may *give*.

Indeed what a treasure-house it is, holding the riches of so many deeds, from the sacrifice of a God who died on the cross, to so lowly an act as the giving of a glass of water in His name!

And what a companionship! The thousands of

good sisters and nurses, ministering to the sick and dying in the hospitals; the thousands of teachers, men and women, preaching the doctrine of Christ everywhere, to all races and peoples, civilized and uncivilized; the bands of brave missionaries; those suffering Christians who bear with patience the burden of their misfortunes; the companionship of the faithful everywhere and in all times, of to-day and the past twenty centuries; the legions of martyrs, the army of confessors, the multitude of saints, "the great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues" (Apoc. vii: 9) that are in heaven. All of the living who daily offer their merits are our brothers and sisters. And the great treasure is available for us, as members of the militant and suffering Church, because of God's Infinite wisdom and mercy and love.

Here is a communism that makes us all children of God, and grants us the joy of giving as well as that of receiving; and all for no small material success or happiness, but for life everlasting together, at the feet of our Father.



The fruits of the Communion of Saints are manifold. But many of those fruits are now hidden from us. We offer up prayer for some object, but the prayer does not appear to be granted. And yet, the power of that prayer may be working for a better end, and we never know. We give alms in a small way, with scarcely a thought, and lo, that alms may help in the salvation of a soul. Even in cases where it would seem that a sinner has died without repentance and the grace of God, it may often be that through the help of the Communion of Saints he repented at the last moment, unknown to those who stood at his bedside waiting for the last heart-beat. God alone knows the truth of many death-beds.

Out of the Great War came many stories, but there is one I remember above all others.

It is the true story of Ernest Psichari, the grandson and also the godson of Renan, the famous skeptic who toiled to uproot belief in the divinity of Christ, and whose writings were nourishment to the swiftly-growing weeds of skepticism. For years Renan's "Life of Christ" was the text-book of unbelievers and opponents



of Christianity. The circumstances of Renan's life are peculiar in that he was an ecclesiastical student who left the seminary before receiving Holy Orders to become a rank and militant infidel.

Ernest Psichari was educated outside the Church, as his father was not a Catholic. His boyhood ambition was to be a great soldier, for he loved the army. When he grew to manhood he joined the army and finally, as an officer, was sent to Africa.

There is something of reflected grandeur and magnificence in nature's mighty panoramas that cause man's thoughts to turn to God's mightiness and man's littleness. Alone, there in the great silent desert, the mind of the ambitious young officer turned to pondering on the great religious truths. He would wander out into the engulfing silence and beauty of the desert nights, and there, by himself, he would attempt to solve the questions of God and eternity and his personal relation to both. His thoughts turned towards the teachings of the Catholic Church, and finally God

gave him grace, and the boy was converted to Catholicism.

He was fervent and practical in his faith and wrote several books that made a great impression on his fellow-officers. There was one in particular that created much discussion, "The Journey of the Centurion," in which he told the story of his conversion.

One of the greatest preoccupations of his life became the salvation of his grandfather Renan, whom he loved deeply.

He was talking one day to a Dominican Father about the question that then absorbed his heart—the salvation of his dead grandfather. And he asked the priest if God, who knows all and to whom there is no past and no future, would accept a sacrifice for the soul of his dead grandfather. The priest told him yes.

The answer moved the heart of the young officer deeply. From that moment his whole life was taken up with the possibility of his offering a sacrifice to God, in the present, that might move Him to give his grandfather, who had apparently

died outside the fold in the past, the grace of salvation.<sup>1</sup>

And he pondered what would be the greatest sacrifice. Finally, he made up his mind that the greatest sacrifice he could make would be to renounce the world and the army he loved so well and put aside all his ambitions and dreams for the future, that he might become a Religious. This sacrifice should be for the salvation of Renan's soul. He was about to do it.

<sup>1</sup>The *Revue Apologetique* (Tome XXXVII, No. 422, 1 Decembre, 1923), prints an interesting note on "La Fin de Renan." The *Revue* bases its remarks on a work published last year at Paris under the title "Renan d'après les Documents Inédits." The author, M. Jean Pommier, was enabled to make use of certain manuscripts in the "Fonds Renan," at the National Library, and of other papers procured for him by Mme. Noemi Renan.

On the 29th of September, 1892, Ernest Renan entered upon his last agony. We quote from the "Journal de Mme. Cornélie Renan," used by M. Pommier. "Ces dernières heures furent remplies d'une longue et incessante plainte. . . . Ayez pitié de moi, mon Dieu, ayez pitié de moi, j'ai pitié de moi-même, disait-il d'une voix forte." (These last hours were filled with a long and constant complaint. "Have compassion on me, O God, have compassion on me, I pity myself," he said in a loud voice). It seems, then, that this arch-infidél in his last hour turned and appealed to the mercy of God. Let us hope that his dying prayer was not in vain!

And then the war broke out. He went as a captain of artillery with the French army in the retreat before the Marne. There he was killed.

Did God accept the grandson's sacrifice?

We do not know. That is one of the mysteries of the Communion of Saints. But we do know that God is our Father.

## X

### SHARE-HOLDERS' MUTUAL BENEFIT ASSOCIATION

“PRAYER,” says St. Augustine, “is the strength of man and the weakness of God.”

In spite of his power to amass wealth and fame, man has no strength to compare with prayer. He can do things innumerable and great. But the tiniest of imperceptible bacilli, millions of which can be contained in one drop of water, is sufficient to engender death.

And what can man do in the face of the mighty hostile powers of the universe? He cannot even control misfortune. When evil falls upon the most powerful man on earth he can but bend beneath the weight of misery. The poor man who can pray may smile in the face of adversity. His prayer is the weakness of God. He, before whom all power trembles, cannot resist the power of prayer.

Prayer has its roots in human nature itself. From the hour of birth to the hour of death, man depends on help. He early learns to ask. Everybody knows how to pray because everybody has learned to solicit assistance and favors.

When the Apostles asked our Lord to teach them how to pray, He taught them the "Our Father," which is a lesson in asking. It has seven petitions, in which are included our temporal as well as spiritual needs. But prayer is not simply the seeking of favors. It is an elevation and application of our souls and hearts to God, to offer Him homage, to expose our necessities and ask for help. When we offer Him homage, we offer Him our adoration, gratitude, love, praise, and acknowledge our dependence upon Him. Accordingly, in prayer we worship. It is the very definition of prayer that "we elevate our souls to God to ask favors of Him."

Often did our Lord recommend prayer to His Apostles. And in various ways he showed them the efficacy of prayer. "Ask and you shall receive," He told them. A man who prays with



true faith will obtain his request. But oftentimes faith is not strong enough. Sometimes he forgets to pray when he should pray. Sometimes he does not pray in the proper way. At other times the grace he seeks is so great that only a very powerful prayer could obtain it. Often, he needs the help of the prayers of others. And it is his membership in the Communion of Saints that entitles him to this help.

Prayer is necessary for salvation. But many forget to pray. Many do not pray at all. Many do all in their power to be damned. They have faith, and consequently, they belong to the Communion of Saints, but they are dead members. Yet, how many souls there are praying for those who do not pray! If we could discern the prayers of the faithful rising like columns of frankincense, as St. John describes the prayers of the saints, the earth seen from a distance would resemble a huge Pittsburgh. How many are praying at their daily work, in their homes, in chapels, in sanctuaries, monasteries, in the numerous institutions of the Catholic Church; are offering

hourly, daily, all forms of good works and sacrifices for sinners, for the sick, the dying, those in spiritual need or temporal tribulation; or for the innumerable intentions of other members of the Communion of Saints in this world and in purgatory!

It is the Apostleship of Prayer that combines the good works and prayers of this multitude of the faithful for particular objects. It has been called the "Apostleship of Prayer" because it seeks the same ends as the Apostles—the promotion of God's glory and the salvation of souls—using the same means employed by them, prayer and good works offered in union with Christ, our Lord, and with the sentiments of His Divine Heart.

The Apostleship of Prayer is a communion within the Communion of Saints, made up of the faithful everywhere. With Christ as their Head, the members pray and work together for the benefit of souls. Great is the power of these thirty millions of good Catholics striving together for the same intention. The good works of each

solitary soul are combined with the holy sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world, and both are united for the intentions of Christ Himself and the special object of the Apostleship.

Thus we see the Apostleship of Prayer as a great union, large and powerful, and yet it is but a small part of the Communion of Saints.

## XI

### GILT-EDGE STOCK

**S**OME years ago I went to say Mass at the catacombs of St. Calixtus in Rome.

It was a morning of extraordinary beauty in the Roman Campagna, with the sunlight streaming out of the Italian sky like liquid gold, and the clear morning air heavy with the perfume of wild violets. There was a quiet, a holiness in the surroundings, that filled me with a strange peace as I descended to say my first Mass in that spot consecrated by the prayers and lamentations of the persecuted Christians and by the bodies of thousands of martyrs.

A few days before, I had been in the catacombs of St. Domitilla when hundreds of the faithful with lighted candles in their hands, the women with veiled heads, had formed a proces-

sion after the fashion of the first Christians. Together with them, I had gone through the dark galleries singing the Litany of the Saints. There was an appeal in that chant, there in the dark lonely sanctuaries of the holy dead, that went to the depths of the heart.

"Holy Mary, pray for us," chanted the priests. And "Holy Mary, pray for us," answered the procession.

"Holy Michael, pray for us," would rise the voice of the priests. "Holy Michael, pray for us," would repeat the throng.

"All ye Saints of God, pray for us," the priest-voices would drift back over the long line, and in a moment the response, "All ye Saints of God!" . . . And the words would echo and re-echo farther and farther down the hollow silent corridors; echo and re-echo, "All ye Saints of God!" . . . Then, far off, a faint reverberation, "All ye Saints of God!" . . . until the deep silence and the darkness would engulf the last words.

There, the early Christians in the days of the persecutions, carrying on their shoulders the

bodies of their martyrs for burial in the sand of the dark walls, had sung the same words. And centuries later, the sound of their chant again in that consecrated spot had brought to me the truth of the Communion of Saints in all its beauty.

But when on that lovely morning, I had descended to say Mass at the altar of St. Cecelia, my patron saint, when I had said the prayers of the Mass that day for the living and the dead, when I had consecrated the Bread and Wine and offered the Victim to God the Father as an "Alter Christus,"—another Christ,—then more than ever did there come to me the realization not only of the beauty but of the infinite power of the Communion of Saints.

For years I had been saying Mass with the utmost devotion, with all the faith that my mother had instilled into my heart, but it seemed that it was not until that day in the catacombs that I realized the full meaning of the holy sacrifice,—its awful but joyful significance.

In Japan in the sixteenth century, the faithful tramped hundreds of miles, crossing swollen



streams, climbing mountains, laboring over rugged paths, to attend the Mass of a missionary. In the days of Elizabeth's persecutions, priests, hunted like murderers, disguised themselves as peddlers or beggars, fled across the countrysides to lonely huts to say Mass to no music but the sobs of their persecuted flock. All through the centuries are recorded countless instances where the faithful and their shepherds braved torture and death to assist at the holy sacrifice of the Mass. In spite of the persecutors' threats to kill, through suffering, privations, through the slaughter of war, famine and pestilence, the sacrifice went on. What is that *something* that has held so strongly the hearts of men and women for almost two thousand years, that *something* so powerful, so compelling? It is more than an august ritual, a solemn ceremony. It is a repetition of the Sacrifice on Golgotha. It is again the Victim of the Cross.

Adam and Eve, out of Paradise, felt immediately the necessity of appeasing God whom they had offended. He was Master of life and

death, and in His just anger, He had told them they would die. So, we see their children offering God "sacrifice." The same, as we read in the scriptures, did Noah on the still wet slopes of Mt. Ararat, and the Lord was pleased with his sacrifice, and promised not to punish the world again with a deluge.

The patriarchs, too, offered their sacrifice to God. And to offer sacrifice to Jehovah, a whole order of priests was created in the ancient law,—the Levites. In the sacrifices of Israel, the priests sometimes offered bloody victims to God,—lambs and goats and calves were killed. Wine and milk were poured on the altar to show that they recognized the Supreme Master of the world, in whose hands are life and death.

Not all the sacrifices of the ancient law required the death of the victim. There was the famous annual goat-sacrifice for the sins of the people. While all present were making a confession of their sins, the priests would hold their hands over the goat, to signify that, symbolically, all the sins of the people were transferred to the

victim. The goat was not killed, but cast out into the wilderness and so rendered as useless as if it were dead. We read in the bible how some of the sacrifices pleased God. But even the high priest, when offering up a sacrifice for the people, had first to offer a sacrifice for his own sins.

When Christ came, all those sacrifices were abolished. A new sacrifice was offered when the Son of God died on a cross "to bear the sins of many." (Heb. ix: 28.)

On Calvary, our Lord was both High Priest and Victim.

There is a remarkable painting of Christ Crucified . . . above Him bend the angels, and at the foot of His cross is a priest offering the sacrifice of the Mass. Into his chalice flows Christ's precious blood, and overflowing, streams down to the lowest part of the earth. And there the souls in purgatory are sharing in the sacrifice of redemption. It is an expressive visualization of the truth of the Communion of Saints.

Christ offered Himself on the cross but once.

The same sacrifice is repeated daily in the Mass. Although it is not bloody, it is the same,—the Victim is the same,—Christ. The High Priest is the same,—Christ. And He is still the High Priest though the sacrifice is offered through the ministry of the priests.

“A sacrifice is an offering made to God, by a legitimate priest, of a sensible thing, that in some way is rendered useless, in honor of God as Supreme Master of life and death.” Sometimes the victim is rendered useless by killing it. Sometimes, as in the libations of wine and milk, by pouring over the altar. Again, as in the case of the goat, the casting it out into the wilderness renders it useless.

After the words of consecration in the Mass, under the species of bread is the Body, under the species of wine is the Blood. The Body and Blood, only mystically separated, are offered to God the Father through the ministry of the priests. Yet, the true High Priest is the One in whose name and through whose power the transubstantiation is wrought, the One who on

the night of His passion offered this sacrifice for the first time to His Eternal Father, the One who commanded His disciples, the ministers in the new priesthood, to offer up in His name His sacrifice to His Father until the consummation of the world.

The Divine Word made flesh assumed a human body like our own. This body, through a miracle of divine omnipotence, under the cover of the species of bread and wine, is, after the consecration, without extension or resistance. Yet it does not cease to be a true corporeal substance.

According to physical laws, the organs of the body, deprived of local extension and resistance, are unable to perform their natural functions. Under the sacramental species Christ is as if He were dead. And all for love of us.

The thought even of such a complete sacrifice is overwhelming. It frightens the human imagination. It is too tremendous for the greatest of human hearts. Only a God could have given such an awful proof of His love.

But Christ did not stop there. He knew in His divine wisdom the need of man for spiritual nourishment. He saw that long ages after, when Golgotha had become a name for historians, man would crave for more than the memory of Him; and that man's soul, weary of abstractions, and weighed down beneath the cares and worries of the material world, would long for some particular, concrete assistance and consolation. And so, Christ offered His Body and Blood as food for the millions to come.

When one walks out in a night of silent beauty and sees the huddled shadows and pale lights of the landscape before him, and looks above, at the stars spread out there in splendor, he feels despair at the thought of the insignificance of his own warm, beating heart. And the thought of God, vaster than the night, more beautiful than the stars, might stagger him, did he not know that that God had left Himself in countless little tabernacles, in order that man might find there comfort and strength.

This is the consummation of what St. John



saw in the Apocalypse, when he tells of "a Lamb standing as if it were slain" and ready to serve as "food" for all who desired. As in the ancient law, the Levites, after the sacrifice, distributed among those present the half-burnt limbs of the sacrificed lamb, so, in the new law, the priest after the holy sacrifice distributes the immolated Victim, Christ, saying: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world," and then, "May the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul unto life everlasting."

When I said Mass for the first time in the catacombs my heart was full of these thoughts, and I said to myself that it was no wonder that the martyrs, realizing the immense love of Christ who not only died for them, but also remained as Victim in the Sacrament of Love, went so willingly to die for Him who cared so much for them. That atmosphere impregnated with the faith of the martyrs, and those walls that echoed the prayers of so many confessors and virgins were an inspiration for me. I seemed

to find a more mystical sweetness in each of the wonderful prayers of the Mass, especially those of the Canon that are offered for the Church and the Pope, in commemoration of the living and for those present, and those who have gone before us in the sign of faith and sleep the sleep of peace.

At the end of my Mass, I seemed to have seen the mystery of the Communion of Saints in a new and more radiant light.

## XII

### RE-INSTALLATION

**T**HE story is told of a beggar, who, seeking alms, went from door to door in the village, but asked in vain. And then he betook himself to the desert. All day long he wandered up and down the low sand hills waiting for some rich traveler or caravan that might take pity on his wretchedness. But again, his quest was in vain.

Then at sunset, as he was returning to the village, he saw suddenly, in the low level light, a man riding along on a stately white camel. He hurried across the sands and as he drew near the traveler, he perceived, from the insignia on the harness and the rich trappings, that the rider, although he was alone, was a prince.

He approached the prince and begged for alms. His expectations were great, and he awaited the prince's reply with trepidation.

"Dear beggar," said the prince, stopping his camel, "it is I who must beg from you. Will you give me a shell full of water, for I am very thirsty?"

The beggar was disappointed. So he took from his shells the very smallest and filled it with water.

The prince took the beggar's small offering and rode away. Regretting the loss of the tiny shell he had given, the beggar stood motionless and watched the white camel and its rider disappear over the low desert stretches into the town.

But that night when he returned to his hut at the outskirts of the village, he saw something glittering in a basket on the floor. He bent down eagerly and lifted up the gleaming object. It was the tiny shell he had given the prince, and it was filled with sands of gold. Then, indeed, did the beggar grieve that he had not given to the prince the largest of his shells.

Christ oftentimes is like the prince of the story. Many thousands go to the sacrifice of

the Mass, to that fountain "springing into everlasting life" (John iv: 14). The Saviour is there, ready to give all of His merits, but He gives only in proportion to the vessel that is offered to Him. Thus does Christ reward with the golden sands of His grace. And the heart that is offered in full to Christ is filled by Him to overflowing.

Ingratitude freezes generosity as an Arctic wind chills summer waters. Thousands daily receive abundant favors from God through the merits and intercession of Christ in the holy sacrifice. But few who receive those favors remember to thank our Lord. Ten lepers were restored to health by the Saviour, but only one returned to thank Him, and that one a stranger. Does one wonder that Christ who loved us almost incredibly much was sensitive in the matter of gratitude? Did He not ask the grateful leper who returned: "Were there not ten made clean? And where are the other nine?" (Luke xvii: 17.)

The best way to receive in the future is to be

grateful for favors in the past. The Church knows this and is constantly thanking God for His benefits, especially for having given us Christ in the Redemption. "It is truly meet and just, right and availing unto salvation," she says in the preface of the Mass, "that we should in all times and in all places give thanks to Thee, Holy Lord, Father Almighty, Eternal God; through Christ Our Lord." . . .

Grace it is—to repeat a little—that makes us living members of the Communion of Saints. This grace is a gift from God. It is generally called "Christ's grace" because it was merited for us by Christ. Now, God has promised to give us eternal life and the means to obtain it. God is as good as His word. When a Christian commits a mortal sin and is no longer eligible for the eternal prize, He offers the sinner a way to regain his good-standing. That way is the beautiful Sacrament of Penance. Christ, in His great mercy, has taken pity on our own unworthiness, and has given to His disciples the power of forgive sins.



A priest, a friend of mine, once told me of a little experience he had had. On one occasion when visiting, he was stricken with a sudden illness and brought to a public hospital. Nobody recognized him as a priest. The first night while in a high fever he became semi-delirious. In his restlessness he wanted to leave his bed. A powerful hospital attendant was set to watch him.

During the early morning hours the priest managed to carry out his wish. He was making his way towards the door when suddenly the attendant, who had been dozing, awoke, seized him roughly, and, with no attempt at gentleness, threw him back upon the bed.

The priest had not been altogether unconscious of what had happened, and resented this burly man's treatment of him. Next afternoon, when the attendant returned to duty, the priest called him to his bedside.

"Give me your hand," he commanded.

The other thought him mad, but, to humor him, he gave him his hand,—an immense, rugged fist with a grip like steel.

"Now," said the priest, taking the powerful hand of the attendant in his own thin, emaciated fingers, "which of those two hands do you think mightier?"

The man smiled at the question. But the priest repeated it very clearly and plainly, to show that he was not insane.

"Do you want to compare my hand with yours?" finally asked the attendant. "Do you really want to find out which hand is stronger? Watch."

He took up a small log of wood lying nearby and broke it between his hands as if it had been a mere twig. He smiled triumphantly.

"Can you do that?"

"No," said the priest. "I cannot do that. But are your hands consecrated? Can you forgive sins?"

The attendant looked at him strangely for half a minute. He was a Catholic, and suddenly light broke upon him.

"Father!" he exclaimed, "you are a priest!"

And he threw himself on his knees, like the big simple fellow that he was. "Forgive me, I

had no idea that you were a priest this morning. Forgive me.”

The priest blessed him as he knelt there. His hands were the more powerful—the thin, weak hands of a priest who could forgive sins.

The priest is *ALTER CHRISTUS*—another Christ—and when he gives the sinner absolution he says: “I absolve thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost,” because Christ has said to him: “Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven.” (John xx: 23.)

It is by the grace of Christ in the sacrament of penance and the ministry of the priest that the sinner is restored to living membership in the Communion of Saints. The eternal punishment is forgiven, but not the temporal punishment, unless suitable penance is done or the merits of some other of the faithful are given to pay the debt. So it is that the priest, after giving a penance that must be performed, adds: “The passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the merits of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of all the Saints,

and any good work that you may do or any suffering that you may sustain, be unto you for the remission of your sins, the augmentation of grace, and the ultimate reward of eternal life." In these words one can discover a very lucid explanation of the workings of the Communion of Saints.

Christ, after He has brought the sinner back to the full privileges of the Communion through the ministry of His priests, is eager for the sinner to increase his merits more and more. He wishes him to remain a living member always. In our natural life we need food for the nourishment of the body; likewise, for our supernatural life, we require sustenance for the soul. This sustenance Christ offers, in His own Body and Blood. "For My flesh is meat indeed and My blood is drink indeed." (John vi: 56.) With the aid of this celestial food that produces by its own virtue a special grace, similar in effect in our souls to food in its effect upon our bodies, we grow stronger to journey on to eternal life.

"May the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ pre-

serve thy soul unto life everlasting," says the priest in administering Holy Communion. And, when on our death-bed, we are preparing for the last stage of the journey, Christ comes to serve as our Viaticum, to guard us from the malignant enemy and bring us into eternal life.

## XIII

### FINAL COMPENSATION

**T**HERE are very few of us who need no aid in the faltering, final hour of death.

Monsignor Dupanloup, a famous French bishop, was once called to the death-bed of a young woman whom, years before, he had prepared for her first Holy Communion. The father of the girl met him as he entered the house.

"She is so young," he whispered to the prelate, "that we dare not tell her she is dying. Your Grace who knows her so well had better break the terrible news to her."

The bishop at once went to the sick room. To his astonishment, the dying girl greeted him with a smile. The bishop became ill at ease and could not speak.

"Your Grace," said the girl, noting his un-



easiness, "do not fear to give me the news you have. Am I going to die?"

The bishop, embarrassed, could not find words to reply.

The girl continued, still smiling:

"If that is all, Monsignor, do not think that I am afraid. Rather, I am happy. Were it not for those I leave behind, I would have no grief at all."

She paused a moment and then turned to the prelate and asked him:

"You remember that you prepared me for my First Communion? And do you remember that, after renewing the promises of baptism, you told us to keep those promises faithfully if we wished to go to heaven?"

The bishop, not knowing what the question was leading up to, nodded in silence.

"Then, do you not remember that when you spoke of love for our Blessed Mother, you told us not to forget to say, every night, three 'Hail Marys' in her honor, and when we came to the words: 'Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for

us sinners now and at the hour of our death'—to lift our eyes to her in heaven and ask her for a happy death?"

The bishop again assented.

"Then, do you believe," the girl went on, "that after these many years of asking her for that grace night after night with all my heart, she is going to refuse to bring me to heaven and show me the blessed fruit of her womb, Jesus? No, Monsignor, I have not the slightest doubt or fear. I have believed in her help all my life and I am confident that she will not forsake me now."

The girl died a happy death, because, in the words of the Memorare, "never was it known that anyone who fled to thy (her) protection, implored thy help, and sought thy intercession, was left unaided."

But that girl was one of a few.

At death we stand before the gates of eternity. We have been members of the great Communion of Saints. Our aim has been to gain eternal life. The time comes then when our objective will be forever won or lost.

At that solemn moment the Communion rushes to our aid. The Church pleads for us and consoles us with prayers of great sweetness and calls upon the members of that vast society to aid us in our last and momentous battle.

How superbly lovely and appealing are the words of the Church in this decisive moment!

The priest comes, extends his consecrated hands over the head of the sick person, and says: "May Our Lord Jesus Christ, the salvation of the world and Son of the Blessed Virgin Mary, be clement and propitious to thee by the intercession of the Apostles Peter and Paul and of all the Saints." Then, when he is about to anoint the sick person, he says: "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, let there be extinguished in thee any diabolical power, by the imposition of our hands and by the invocation of all the Saints, Angels, Archangels, Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins, and all the Saints together."

Afterwards, he anoints the eyes, ears, lips, hands, and feet of the sick person according to

the words of St. James: "Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil, in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man. . . . And if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him." (v. 14, 15.)

The grace of final perseverance cannot be merited by any man. It is a gift of God. But certainly it can be obtained by prayer. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." (Matt. vii: 7, 8.) These are the words of the Lord. These, His promises. And heaven and earth shall pass away, but His words shall not pass away.

If ever man needs prayer, it is at his last hour. Then it is that the Church pleads: "Lord, have mercy on him; Christ, have mercy on him; Lord, have mercy on him; Holy Mary, pray for him; all ye Holy Angels and Archangels pray for him;

. . . all ye Choirs of the Just, pray for him; . . . John the Baptist, St. Joseph, all ye Patriarchs and Prophets, pray for him; St. Peter, St. Paul, . . . all ye holy Apostles and Evangelists, pray for him; all ye holy disciples of the Lord, all ye holy Innocents, . . . pray for him. All ye Holy Martyrs, . . . all ye holy Bishops and Confessors . . . all ye Monks and Hermits, all ye holy Virgins and Widows, pray for him, pray for him. All ye Saints of God, make intercession for him. Be merciful, spare him, O Lord. From Thy anger, deliver him, O Lord. . . . From an unhappy death, from the pains of Hell, from all evil, from the power of the devil, deliver him, O Lord. By Thy Nativity, by Thy Cross and Passion, by Thy Death and Burial, by Thy Glorious Resurrection, by Thy Admirable Ascension, by the grace of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. . . . Deliver him, O Lord. We sinners beseech Thee to hear us, that Thou spare him. . . . We beseech Thee to hear us. . . .”

And then the priest addresses the soul in these beautiful, and solemn words:

“Depart, Christian soul, out of this world in the name of God the Father Almighty Who created thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God Who suffered for thee, in the name of the Angels, Archangels, Thrones, and Dominations, Cherubim and Seraphim; in the name of the Patriarchs and Prophets, of the Holy Apostles and Evangelists, of the Holy Martyrs and Confessors, of the Monks and Hermits, of the Holy Virgins and of all the Saints of God, and may thy place be this day in peace and thy abode in holy Sion, through Christ Our Lord.”

Thus the Church calls upon the members of the great corporation for their help in the hour of death.

The priest then continues:

“God of mercy, God of goodness; O God, Who according to the multitude of Thy mercies forgivest the sins of such as repent, and graciously remittest the guilt of their past offenses, mercifully regard this Thy servant and grant him full discharge from all his sins, who most earnestly begs it of Thee. Remove, O Merciful Father,



whatever is corrupt in him through human frailty, or by the snares of the enemy; make him a true member of the Church, and let him partake of the fruit of Thy Redemption. Have compassion, O Lord, on his tears, and admit him to the Sacrament of Thy reconciliation, who has *no hope but in Thee*, through Christ Our Lord."

There are a few other prayers and then the priest concludes: "We commend to Thee, O Lord, the soul of this Thy servant, and beseech Thee, Jesus Christ, Redeemer of the world, that as in mercy to him Thou becamest man, so now Thou wouldst vouchsafe to admit him into the number of the blessed. Remember, O Lord, he is Thy creature, not made by strange gods but by Thee, the only true and living God. . . . Let his soul find comfort in Thy sight, and remember not his former sins, nor any of those excesses which he has fallen into through the violence of passion and corruption. For although he has sinned, he *has retained a true faith in Thee*, Father, Son and Holy Ghost; he has a zeal for Thy honor and has faithfully adored Thee, his God and Creator.

. . . Let the Heavens be opened to him and the Angels rejoice with him. Receive, O Lord, Thy servant in Thy Kingdom. Let the Archangel St. Michael, the chief of the heavenly host conduct him. Let the Holy Angels of God meet him and bring him into the city of the Heavenly Jerusalem. May Blessed Peter the Apostle to whom were given the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, receive him. . . . May St. John, the beloved disciple, to whom God revealed the secrets of Heaven, intercede for him. May all the Holy Apostles to whom was given the power of binding and loosing, pray for him. May all the Blessed and Chosen Servants of God, who in this world have suffered torments for the name of Christ, pray for him. That, being delivered from the body of corruption, he may be admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven, through the assistance and merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . Amen."

And when death comes, the Church, ever watchful of the living, says, for those present: "Grant O Lord, that while we here lament the departure of Thy servant, we may ever remember

that we are most certainly to follow him. Give us grace to prepare for that last hour by a good life, that we may not be surprised by a sudden and unprovided death, but be ever watching when Thou shalt call, that so we may enter into eternal glory through Christ, Our Lord, Amen. . . .”

Apparently all is over. But the Church continues to pray for the departed. In the preface of the Mass for the Dead, she says: “In whom the hope of a blessed resurrection is shown to us, that they who are saddened by the certain necessity of dying be comforted by the promise of eternal life to come. For the life of Thy faithful, O Lord, is changed, not destroyed; and when the home of this earthly life is dissolved, an everlasting dwelling in Heaven shall be gained. Wherefore with the Angels and Archangels, with the Thrones and Dominions, with all the host of the Army of Heaven we sing the hymn of Thy glory, saying without end: Holy, holy,” etc. . . .

Many and beautiful are the prayers and ceremonies of the Church. With them she has guided the solitary human soul from birth to

death. With them she pleads for the salvation of millions through the centuries. And of all, none has greater grandeur and solemnity, none has a more maternal kindness and solicitude than those with which she prepares and blesses the soul at the hour of death. Those who think of the Church as simply a great and intricate organization, a rigid guardian of dogma, have never known the Church as a gentle and loving mother in time of anguish and despair, a watchful and eager friend when life's last moment is near.

We have, thus far, discussed some of the duties of the members of the Communion of Saints in the Church militant. In our next consideration, we will take up the relation of the members of the Communion of Saints in the Church militant with the dead.



Second Part

OUR RELATIONS WITH THE  
DEAD

*"He that believeth in Me, although he be dead,  
shall live."*

ST. JOHN. xi, 25.





## I

### LIFE AFTER DEATH

**W**HERE do souls go after death?

Shall we ever see again those who have left this world?

Can we in any way communicate with those who are dead?

Life with its joys and its sorrows flows on smoothly, steadily and continuously. Thousands die in sudden catastrophes. We read of plagues in foreign lands, of floods, wars, earthquakes, conflagrations. People die in our own city, town or neighborhood. But all this leaves little impression upon our daily lives. We live with our own aspirations and plans unchanged. We go our own way, with a thought, a moment of sympathy, a passing comment, but little more. Unconsciously we feel that death has nothing to do with us; we seldom stop to picture the world

going on just the same, with sunrise and sunset, with laughter and talk between friends, with toil and sorrow, growth and accomplishment,—and we not here.

Then suddenly there comes the death of one whose life is bound up in our own, a dear relative, an intimate friend. He dies and is laid away,—and around him settles an oblivion as deep, almost, as if he had never lived. We have a thousand memories of little things he said and did. But he is gone. No word comes from him, no whisper even.

We pause for a moment and ask ourselves: What has happened to him? Where is he? Why does he not communicate with us?

And then, after pondering on these questions, we ask ourselves: *Shall* we, *can* we see him again?

*No* is the emphatic answer of material science. *No*. He has gone back to the earth from which he sprung. His body will unite with the earth again and perhaps give growth to vegetable life. But he as you knew him is gone. That arrange-

ment of atoms that you knew as a relative or friend has been destroyed. Save for those scattered atoms, there is nothing that survives. He is gone, gone forever. You have murmured over his body: "May he rest in peace!" He will rest in peace, in an endless, thoughtless, emotionless peace, from which there is no awakening.

But reason enters and says: Surely all does not end with the disintegration of the atoms that formed the body of your lost one. There is something in him that dreamed and willed and thought, something that transcended matter. It is the human soul, and that will survive.

But *where* is that surviving entity? Has it any means of communication with those on earth? Shall we behold that soul again? Reason cannot answer. To attempt such a thing, it would have to descend to the realm of conjecture. And conjecture does not furnish us with certitude, but only with possibility, or at the most, with some probability. Life after death is outside human experience. Reason alone can do nothing for us.

When the astronomer discusses life on the planet Mars he is dealing with hypotheses. But with a very powerful telescope, that astronomer can discover indications of "channels" and other data which can raise his hypothesis to the dignity of a theory. When man, however, comes to treat of the spirit world he wanders purely in a world of conjecture. He has no instrument to furnish him with data, no means by which he can give his suppositions any foundation in fact.<sup>1</sup>

What can he do? Reason, alone, as we have said, cannot help him. It can prove that a soul survives, that there is a Supreme Being for whom that soul was made, that the Supreme Being gives that soul a suitable reward or punishment. But when we ask: Where is that soul after death? Has it any means of communication with us, or we with it? Shall we see it again? Then we must turn to the great helper, faith.

Remember, faith is not the resource of the

<sup>1</sup> See: "Spiritism and Common Sense," by C. M. de Heredia, S. J. (New York), Kenedy & Sons.

outwitted. As we remarked earlier in these considerations, most of our earthly knowledge does not come from our personal experience but from the testimony of others. Faith is the network that holds the living millions together. At every turn, almost every minute, we are dependent on information obtained from those who inhabit the world with us.

Now, we want knowledge of a world beyond our own experience. To whom shall we go for information? There is no hesitation. The Catholic knows that God has given the keys of heaven to the Church,—his answer is ready. We will ask the Catholic Church.

We ask the Church: Can we see our loved ones after death?

The Church immediately answers: Yes.

Where are they?

The Church answers this question in detail.

We go farther, and ask: Is there any way of communicating with the souls of the dead?

Again the Church replies without hesitation: Yes.



But we are human. So we want to see, to feel, to touch, to experience in some way this communication, and we ask again: Can the souls of the dead communicate with us in a manner which we may behold with our ordinary senses?

Once more, the Church answers: Yes.

## II

### “SO THAT IS HEAVEN!”

**T**HE Church tells us that we shall meet our friends and relatives and all we hold dear in the next world.

Says Revelation: “And these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into everlasting life.” (Matt. xxv: 46.) We know with certitude, then, that some will go to hell and some to heaven. Just now, I shall not speak of hell.

Then, what is heaven? Says Scripture: “Now this is eternal life: that they may know Thee the only true God.” (John xvii: 3.) To see God and be united with Him in the most intimate love for all eternity—that is heaven.

A look of indifference, or skepticism, even of chagrin, comes over the face of the listener. “Is that all? Is that heaven? Is that what we should look forward to, work for, dream of? Is that the goal of life? I would rather stay here

on earth. It is beautiful here. It is human here. I have my good friends and good times. I prefer the earth."

It is very natural to think this way. A reward given by a human being at times seems beyond belief. Is it not true that oftentimes we cannot conceive the extent of a man's gratitude for a little kindly deed? The proportionate munificence or magnificence of his reward surprises us.

How much more vast, more inconceivably great, must be the reward of a God? Of what unimaginable loveliness must be the paradise which the Master has prepared for His faithful? It is so far beyond our lowly human comprehension that we cannot realize a state of such limitless contentment. Let one take the beauty of the sunset, the love of a great-hearted mother, the sweetness of an hour of perfect kindness, the intoxicating bliss of a moment of dazzling glory or of great accomplishment; let one take the sum of life's most intense minutes of beauty, love and joy, and magnify all until his imagination staggers beneath the overwhelming splendor and

dazzlingly huge proportions of his creation. Then, the acme of his effort, the most perfect moment of his great experiment is as nothing beside the bliss that an Infinite Love has devised. One's heart, it seems, would burst if it should try to encompass even one stray joy of paradise.

One must not think of heaven simply as a place of “harps of gold” and shining lights. It is a state that will fill and satisfy the humblest, simplest soul, as well as the soul of the supreme artist. Every fleeting moment of quiet joy or peace on earth is but a swift, small glimpse of paradise. Here we see dimly, beauty, truth, goodness. In heaven we shall be near to the Heart of all Beauty, Truth and Goodness,—God!

The inability of the human soul to comprehend heaven reminds me of a story.

One Christmas Eve, a small boy sat beneath a Christmas tree, eagerly opening his gifts. He glanced quickly through the heap of packages for one thing above all others—the gift of his godfather. It was not there. Then, he heard a step and turned. His godfather stood in the

room behind him. For months the boy had been waiting for this moment, the one in which he would receive this particular present. For his godfather was very rich.

The godfather held back a moment further to arouse the boy's curiosity, and then, bending down, gave him a little package. The boy eagerly cut the cord and opened the box.

A look of intense disappointment clouded his face. He found only a few printed pages with signatures at the end. So thwarted were his high hopes that he hurled the papers into the fireplace.

His mother by a quick movement saved them from the flames.

The godfather looked on, a little displeased. But his wife, who knew human nature better than he, gave the little fellow a handful of small coins.

The boy's face brightened with joy. He danced around the room with delight. He had a handful of coins. He was wealthy by his own conceit. Pastry and candy could he buy with his pennies. At that hour he asked no more.

The godfather left for home. Then the boy's mother took the papers she had rescued from the fire, folded them carefully and put them away.

They were deeds giving the boy ownership of a great estate. And the boy raced about, happy as he jangled his pocketful of pennies.

We are like that boy. To-day we cannot realize the greatness of the gift of heaven. “That they may know Thee” is as unintelligible to us as the legal script to the boy. It is to such a lack of comprehension that St. Paul refers when he says: “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But when I became a man, I put away the things of a child.” (I. Cor. xiii: 2.)

In our material body we are as children. We have to use material images when we think. We imagine that there is no happiness like worldly happiness. And if we wish to think of a celestial happiness we retain our present conception as a foundation for it. This is wrong, though we can not see our error now. And so it is that St.



Paul continues: "We see (God) now through a glass in an obscure manner; but then, face to face. Now I know (God) in part, but then I shall know (Him) as I am known." (Id. 12.)

Many have endeavored to explain to mortals what heaven is. But all have failed, and all will fail, because comprehension of it is impossible. It is written that "the eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him." (I Cor. ii: 9.)

Descriptions are not only vain but misleading. One writes of heaven as eternal music. But some, like Napoleon, do not like music. Another writes as if heaven were the Olympus of the poets, but there are thousands who would shrink in terror from the thought of listening eternally to poetry. Each portrays heaven according to his tastes and disposition. And no man knows anything about it. It is far better to leave the task alone. Such imaginary heavens are but earthly heavens at the best.

Heaven is the fulfillment of all our wishes,

the satisfaction of all our desires, without surfeit, without boredom, and all because we possess God Himself, and know Him face to face.

Heaven is one place in which we may meet the souls of the departed if we keep the promises we made to God in baptism and die in the state of grace, with all the debts incurred by our sins paid. But should we, dying in the state of grace, be yet in debt for sin, we may meet those who have gone before, in purgatory. For they, too, may be still paying for their sins.

“The most valiant Judas (Maccabees) exhorted the people to keep themselves from sin. . . . And making a gathering, he sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead. . . . And because he considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness had great grace laid up for them. It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins.” (II Mach. xii: 42-46.)

Now, if we can pray for the dead who have

died in godliness to be loosed from their sins, it is because they are neither in heaven nor in hell, but in another place in which they are paying for their sins and where we can help them. That place is called "Purgatory."

Nothing defiled shall enter heaven, says the scripture. Purgatory is a place of purification. There, those souls that died in the friendship of God are being made clean. They are like patients who do not venture from the hospital until entirely cured. When their health is perfect, they may enter heaven. Purgatory is witness to the Infinite Justice of God, but hovering over it always is His Infinite Love. When the defiled soul is purged of its stains, then it may go to the mansion of Him who is All-Purity and Perfection.

### III

#### HELPLESS PRISONERS

**I**N time of war the thought of wounded prisoners is very heartrending. News of the *death* of a friend or relative is tragic enough. But that news is final. He who died is out of misery. But the report that a loved one is wounded and in the hands of the enemy brings to us a heavy burden of worry and fear. Torturing pictures of him arise,—suffering in prison camp, perhaps dying, without friendly care. One is eager to do all in his power to alleviate such distress.

Faith tells us that the souls of the dead may be detained in purgatory. There, they suffer for their sins. They are like the helpless wounded prisoners who can do nothing for themselves. But, unlike the prisoners, they are not in the enemy's camp.

In our solicitude for them we turn to faith and ask whether we may help them, and how. Faith replies Yes—and points out the way. Those suffering souls are members of the Communion of Saints. They can receive help through the prayers and good works of other members, and above all through the sacrifice of the Mass. We have referred to these means previously. But there is another most potent method of assisting these souls—and that is by indulgences,

“An indulgence is the extra-sacramental remission of the temporal punishment due, in God’s justice, to sin that has been forgiven, which remission is granted by the Church in the exercise of the power of the Keys, through the application of the superabundant merits of Christ and of the saints, and for some just and reasonable motive.”

A man runs down another with his automobile and is summoned into court. He is found guilty. The judge pronounces sentence upon him. He is to spend a term in jail, and, in addition, to

pay a fine. But he is thoroughly repentant. He makes an appeal to the court for leniency. The judge cancels the portion of the sentence that commits the man to jail but rules that he must pay his fine.

The sinner is like the automobilist. In the Sacrament of Penance he is restored to grace, and the sentence consigning him to punishment in hell is abrogated. Like the driver, he is freed from serving his time in jail. But as with the one there still remained the fine, so with the other, there still remains the temporal punishment due to sin. This the sinner must pay. If he pays for this temporal punishment in full on this earth and dies in the state of grace, he goes to heaven. If, however, at his death there still is in his soul a venial sin, or if he has remaining some punishment to be paid, he must go to purgatory. It is to undergo this purification that there are souls in purgatory.

These souls are entirely helpless. But, just as a fine in court may be paid by the friends of a convicted man, so the members of the Com-



munion of Saints may help alleviate the suffering souls in purgatory. This they can do chiefly through indulgences and the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

Oftentimes, those in the Church Militant are very poor, not only temporally but spiritually. Our merits may not be enough for ourselves. We may not have the means to have Masses said for the souls of these dead. But, however poor we may be, we can always take advantage of the treasury of indulgences. We are members of the Communion of Saints and we have this great common fund from which to draw. Out of this common fund we are able to pay off our own spiritual debts or the debts of others, as, for instance, the suffering souls in purgatory.

An indulgence is not the forgiveness of the guilt of sin. It presupposes this forgiveness. It is not a sacrament, as, for example, Baptism, in which the guilt of sin and its temporal punishment are remitted, or Penance, where the guilt of mortal sin is removed and with it the eternal punishment due to sin. Nor is an indulgence

like the "penance" imposed by the confessor when he gives absolution, for this is an integral part of the Sacrament of Penance. An indulgence is an extra-sacramental remission. It differs also from penitential and other good works undertaken of our own accord as satisfaction for the temporal punishment of sins of our own or of others, such as prayer, fasting, almsgiving. For all these are personal good works and draw their value from the merit of him who performs them. Whereas an indulgence places at the penitent's or petitioner's disposal those merits of Christ and of the saints that form the treasury of the Communion of Saints.

An indulgence releases the penitent from the obligation of performing a canonical penance (as it was often called in the early days of the Church) and frees him from the temporal punishment which he has incurred in the sight of God. But, as St. Thomas says: "He who gains indulgences is not thereby released outright from what he owes as a penalty, but he is provided with the means of paying for it." The Church,

granting indulgences, neither leaves the penitent helplessly in debt nor acquits him of all further accounting. She merely enables him to meet his obligations.

Indulgences can also be gained for the souls of the dead. These indulgences can be applied to them because they, too, are true members of the Communion of Saints and can be aided by our prayers and good works. When the Pope grants an indulgence applicable to a soul in purgatory, it, as Bellarmine says, "does not absolve the soul in purgatory from punishment due to his sin but offers to God from the treasure of the Church whatever may be necessary for the cancelling of this punishment." (De Indulgentiis. p. 137.)

So, we can help the suffering souls by gaining indulgences for them and praying for them, and, above all, by having the holy sacrifice of the Mass offered for their release. They are suffering now, they are helpless. We have it in our power to aid them. We should not forget.

## IV

### CAN THE SOULS IN PURGATORY COMMUNICATE WITH US?

**I**N the preceding chapter, I referred to the ways by which we could communicate with the souls in purgatory. Now, I will attempt to answer that interesting question,—Can these souls communicate with us in any tangible way, that is, in a way perceptible to our ordinary senses?

In diplomatic circles, information is generally classified under two heads: official and private. Private information, of course, does not carry the same weight as does official information, but there is no diplomat of any experience who would disregard (because it is not official) private information from a dependable source.

The Official (borrowing the above term) Revelation of the Church of Christ has only two

things to say of purgatory: that we must believe in the existence of it; and that the souls are detained there on account of their sins and can be helped by our prayers, good works, indulgences and especially by the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

Just what the sufferings of these souls are, how long they remain there, and similar questions, do not bear the stamp of Divine Revelation. God has not revealed to His Church these and other details about purgatory. Therefore, to answer the above question we must—and this is very important—go out of the province of Official Divine Revelation seeking our sources of information in Private Revelation and appealing to that very solid authority, the “Mind of the Church” (*Sensus Ecclesiæ*). This unchanging opinion of the Church carries an authority of no small importance.

In almost any book of piety, and particularly in the “Lives of the Saints,” we may find an affirmative answer to our question. Apparitions of the suffering souls are frequent in the experi-

ence of the saints and other pious people, and there are innumerable narratives concerning them throughout ecclesiastical literature.

In the city of Rome, on the other side of the Tiber, there is, in a place called Prati di Castello, a church dedicated to the Sacred Heart and the Suffering Souls in Purgatory. Attached to this church is perhaps the most curious museum in the entire world: the Museum of Purgatory. There one may find a quantity of more or less well-authenticated objective evidence collected from many lands substantiating the belief in apparitions of souls from purgatory. A visit to that museum leaves a deep and lasting impression.

Among the many objects there is one that remains vividly in mind,—an open prayerbook with the imprint of the fingers of a hand burnt upon it.

A young man, a soldier in the Napoleonic wars, was severely wounded on a battlefield. As he lay there helpless, he beheld an apparition of his mother who had died when he was but a



child of three or four. She told him she had been suffering in purgatory since her death, and all because she had neglected to instill into her child's young heart a true spirit of religion. It was because of failing in her duty to this very son that she was being punished, and she pleaded with him to pray for her.

He was not of a religious mind and the apparition amazed him. At first he thought it merely an hallucination induced by his wound. But there was no mistaking the piteous pleading of his mother's voice. He promised fervently that he would do all he could to alleviate her suffering.

He recovered. But as the months passed, and the pleasures of the world engulfed him again, he forgot to keep his sacred promise.

One day he was at Mass with a prayerbook open before him. Suddenly he heard again the pleading of his mother's voice. But this time she did not vanish without leaving a remembrance that would urge him to help her. As he gazed down on the open book he saw there, burned

deeply into its pages, the imprint of the fingers of her hand. Here was an actual sign—you may see it to-day in Rome—there would be no forgetting this, or dismissing it as a mere illusion. The young man's life was a changed one. His one ambition was to free his mother from her suffering and to assist the other souls in purgatory.

I did not investigate all the evidence and documents in the museum, but on the whole I received this very vivid impression: Purgatory is a place of terrible suffering. We hear much about the mercy of God and His great love for us, but we must not forget that He who is infinitely merciful is also infinitely just. One has but to turn his eyes towards a crucifix to behold the effect of Divine Justice. “. . . We have seen Him and there was no sightliness. . . . Despised and most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity . . . and we have thought Him as it were a leper and one struck by God and afflicted”—exclaims the Prophet Isaias in his prophetic vision of Our Divine Saviour in His Pas-

sion. (liii: 3-5.) And He suffered thus exceedingly because "He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows." (Idem.) If Christ had to suffer so as to satisfy Divine Justice for *our* sins, one shrinks from the thought of the same Divine Justice meting out punishment to the sinner himself. "For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke xxiii: 31.)

When we read of the overwhelming penances that saints and other pious Christians impose upon themselves to avoid purgatory and to help the souls already suffering there, we have its true meaning brought home to us. It is then that we are able to understand why the Church puts into the mouths of the imprisoned souls that most sorrowful pleading: "De profundis clamavi" . . . "Out of the depths I have cried to Thee, O Lord, Lord hear my voice. . . ." (Ps. cxxix: 1); and why she has them exclaim: "Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you my friends, because the hand of the Lord hath touched me." (Job xix: 21.)

All the ecclesiastical writers who have depicted the pains of purgatory express the Mind of the Church in declaring that these pains are severe. Furthermore, the Church itself authorizes and approves of perpetual Masses for the benefit of a suffering soul. Hence, in her judgment, there is a possibility that a soul may remain in purgatory for a long time. All the Catholic writers and doctors agree that these imprisoned souls can do nothing towards the payment of their own debts, and for this reason they are generally spoken of as "poor" souls. They must remain in purgatory until they have paid by suffering for all the punishment due their sins, or they must be freed by the assistance of those in this world. Too many of us are prone in the daily preoccupation of our lives to forget these sufferers so utterly dependent on our help, these prisoners sentenced by their own sins, crying out to us in voices we do not hear, to accomplish a little, say a prayer, give alms, do a good work, or have Mass said for them, that they may be delivered from their torments. And, too many of us fail

to realize that purgatory may await us also. We are, perhaps, but little different from thousands of souls now suffering there. Now is the time to accumulate satisfactions, for all too soon may come the days of our helplessness.

In studying the life of the Saviour on earth, we find that He performed His miracles for those whose misery was exceptional, as in the case of the lepers; for those whose prayer was full of faith, as the Centurion; for those who were unable to help themselves, as the paralytic at the pool; for those whose physical suffering was due to sin; or, finally, for those who were His friends, as happened in the instances of the miraculous resurrection of Lazarus, or at Cana, when He changed water into wine at the request of His Blessed Mother although His time had not yet come.

The first reason for Christ's miracles was to give proof of His divine mission and establish the faith. But we know that even in our day God yet works miracles, to give us proof of the sanctity of His friends in heaven, the saints.

Of this we will speak a little later. The saints, who are in the hands of God, require a special permission to appear to us; so there is no doubt that the souls in purgatory likewise must have God's permission, for they are prisoners. Some Catholic doctors maintain that a miracle is needed for these souls to appear, because, they argue, there is no *natural* means of communication between a departed soul and those still on earth.

Now, we repeat our question: "Can the souls in purgatory communicate with us in some tangible way?"

Yes, we answer, *if God chooses to perform a miracle for them.*

But, we ask again, if a miracle is necessary, is God willing to perform this miracle for the souls He is punishing?

One cannot answer this question with positive certainty. There are no apodictical or absolutely conclusive reasons for or against it. But after studying every phase of the question we find many *reasons of congruence*, or *plausible* reasons, in favor of an affirmative reply.



We have just made an analysis of the different types for whom our Lord, during His life, performed miracles. When we compare these with the souls in purgatory we have reason enough in favor of believing that He would perform a miracle for these poor souls. Their misery is exceptional; their faith is as strong as it can be; they are helpless themselves; their sufferings are caused directly by their sins; and, finally, they are the dearest friends of His Divine Heart. As at Cana, there is the all-powerful intercession of our Blessed Mother in their favor.

Christ has tied His merciful hands with the bonds of Divine Justice. Though the Blessed Mother and the saints in heaven can pray for the sufferers they can not *merit* for them. But we are living members of the Communion of Saints and have in our possession not only our own merits but the merits of Christ our Lord, the Blessed Mother, and the saints.

The Church is aware of our efficacy in this matter and has a special feast, All Souls' Day, to remind us of our suffering brethren. In addition,

the entire month of November is dedicated to the memory of the departed. In her liturgy she remembers these souls often, and daily she reminds us of them in the sacrifice of the Mass.

Nevertheless, a special, concrete dedication of the activities of the faithful is needed if many souls are to be freed from purgatory. The only way that they may enjoy the liberty of heaven is by our personal application of the merits of Christ and the saints to them, either by having Masses said for their release, or by other good works.

The necessity, then, for personal intervention on our part is clear.

It is but a truism to say that even our most poignant sorrows will eventually disappear. We read to-day in the papers of a frightful earthquake. A month hence, it ceases to be "news" for the papers. They no longer even mention it. The calamity, as far as we are concerned, might never have happened. It is forgotten. Perhaps a friend or relative dies. We are grief-stricken. Loud and sincere is our lamentation. Fervent

and long are our prayers. A break has come in our associations with our fellowmen, and we brood and weep, and feel that the future will be darkened for us. We have Masses said and go into mourning. But the years pass. At first, we meet constant reminders,—a picture, a book, a letter that slips suddenly into our sight. But soon we remember our loved one scarcely ever save on the anniversary of his death.

It is the old, old story. The mists of time, little by little, obscure the harsh outline, and then obliterate it. There are very few on this earth who cannot pause at this moment and recall one or two at least of those whom they once deeply mourned but now have forgotten.

Who is going to pray for these souls that are forgotten? Who is going to help those poor souls who never have any one to pray for them?

Oh, there is need of a reminder, there is need of some intervention to bring back to memory those thousands of souls that have gone on before us. Do you not think, then, that the Lord allows this soul or that to appear sometimes, as did the

mother who left the imprint of her fingers on her son's book, not only as a reminder to him of her own helplessness but also as a sign to all the faithful of the suffering of the forgotten souls? One cannot reply with an incontrovertible affirmative. But the need is clear. The inclination of the entire argument is towards a compelling *Yes!*

There is no wonder in the eyes of the majority of those who read, in the lives of the saints or in ecclesiastical history, of hundreds of apparitions of the souls in purgatory. The sorrowful faces, the tortured bodies, the pitiful cries of these poor souls pleading for help, appear not simply as possibilities but as probabilities that the Saviour did work even a miracle, that they might obtain aid. And there is always the intercession of our Blessed Mother. He did not refuse her on earth. It seems highly improbable that when she, beholding the suffering of those she loves, pleads that these souls may obtain assistance, He will refuse her in heaven.

One cannot, of course, admit that *this* or *that*

apparition is *true* unless there is sufficient proof of its authenticity. But considering these numerous apparitions *as a whole*, it seems almost certain that some of them, at least, are real. Thousands of people may bring home tales of extreme suffering from a distant country. On hearing them, I may say: "This story is an exaggeration; that is obviously false; this one seems probable;" and so on. I must analyze each case and appraise it at its own value. But when I consider these stories all together, I come to the conclusion that there is some truth that gave rise to them all. I am certain that there is suffering in that distant country. So do we consider the stories of apparitions. Some may be false. Some may be exaggerated. But we can have well-founded confidence that there is a truth beneath them as a whole. And that is why, to the question, "Can the souls in purgatory communicate with us?" we answer—Yes.

## V

### DO THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN OBSERVE US?

**W**E read that at the death of our Lord: "The graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints that had slept arose; and coming out of their tombs after His resurrection, came into the Holy City and appeared to many." (Matt. xxvii: 52-53.)

Clearly, then, the saints can appear to us.

We read, too, that Christ Himself, after His Resurrection, appeared to His disciples in His Glorified Body. "But they being troubled and affrighted, supposed that they saw a spirit. And He said to them. . . . See my hands and my feet, that it is myself; feel and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me to have." (Luke xxiv: 37-39.)

But can the *soul* of a saint communicate with us?



“Behold,” say the Gospels, telling of the transfiguration of our Lord, “there appeared to them Moses and Elias.” (Matt. xvii: 3.) Moses was dead, and hence it was his soul and not his body that appeared to Peter, John and James.

Accordingly, there is no question of the possibility of a soul appearing. That is a fact. I am not going to discuss here whether or not it was a miracle. It is enough that Moses and Elias appeared.

But, to get down to the root of the question,—is it *probable* that the souls of the saints that are in heaven will appear to us more or less frequently?

Since the souls of the saints in heaven are in the hands of God, they can do nothing without His permission. Therefore, to answer the above question, one would first have to reply to this: “Is there any good reason why God should allow the souls of the saints to appear to us?”

As with the discussion relating to the souls in purgatory, we again must leave the realm of Official Divine Revelation to consult the Mind of the Church.

“I say to you,” says the Lord, “that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that does penance more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance.” (Luke xv: 7.)

Since, before the resurrection all the saints were in the bosom of Abraham and there were none in heaven, Christ there refers to the angels, for He says later: “So I say to you there shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance.” But His words do not exclude the saints. He says: “There *shall* be joy in heaven.” The heaven after the resurrection is a heaven of saints as well as of angels.

It is evident, then, that if a sinner’s repentance produces such an extraordinary joy in heaven, the saints in heaven closely watch that sinner on earth. They are spectators at life’s tournament, and they follow closely the courage or cowardice, zeal or indifference, triumph or failure, of those engaged in the combat.

But our dead do not see us with carnal eyes. They live in God and His infinite splendor shines over the world, transfiguring it entirely. In the light of glory they see our world as an entirely

different place. Material happiness or unhappiness means little to them, unless it is connected with our *spiritual welfare*. Material beauty or deformity does not move them. Matter does not influence them, for they are spirits and scan our lives for their *spiritual worth*. They search the living for supernatural beauty.

Their attitude is like that of a noble mother I knew. She saw with grief that temporal prosperity had taken her son away from God. And she prayed to the Master that he might take away her son's worldly goods if they were going to be responsible for his spiritual death. When her prayers were heard and her son lost the bulk of his fortune, although she was sad, her inner heart rejoiced for she knew that in this case misfortune was to be the road back to God.

Heaven is like a great home. On earth the fount of the loftiest love is in the home. There, motherly affection is born. There love of father, and sister, and brother, and all family relationships grow, and are nourished. It is true that the Gospel says: "They shall neither marry, nor

be given in marriage; but shall be as the angels of God in Heaven." (Matt. xxii: 30.) This does not mean that all worldly ties are broken, but rather that these ties are transformed from carnal into spiritual bonds. Our Lord said: "Who-soever shall do the will of My Father Who is in Heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother." (Matt. xii: 50.) There is but one home—"My Father's house . . . and I shall go and prepare a place for you." (John xiv: 2.)

Yes, heaven is like a great and perfect home, and the saints in heaven care for us with a solicitude that is directed to our supernatural welfare. The saints see us, but not, as I have previously said, with the eyes of the body. One might say that they *know* us. Their vision is like that of a searchlight. When we are in the state of grace we are in the range of that searchlight. When we are in sin we are out of its range. When we are in the light of God, they rejoice. But when we have fallen away into darkness they have no pain. They simply lose sight of us. They know of our sins as does our guardian angel. It is like

a patriotic father who sees his son renounce his country's flag and shift over to the enemy's ranks. The saints are glad when we fight in the legions of God. When we spurn the flag and go over to His enemies, we are but traitors in their sight.

But do they forget sinners entirely? It does not seem as if this could be so. Among the members of the Church Militant are mothers and many, many of our loved ones. Their prayers and good works arise as incense to heaven. Their pleadings are like letters which they write to God and His saints in our behalf. To these letters surely the saints and our friends in heaven cannot turn a cold heart. One feels certain that they exercise their influence with God to bring us back to the state of grace. This is one reason why prayer is so necessary for salvation. If we do not pray, if no one prays for us at all, there is very little hope that we shall be saved.

A priest some years ago related to me a story that has always been for me a reminder of the



power of prayer. One night he had preached before a crowded church what he thought his most eloquent sermon. After the services he delayed in the sacristy thinking that his efforts surely would move some of the congregation to seek him for confession. He waited in vain. The church became empty and silent. Then, seeing his foolishness, he knelt down to ask God's forgiveness for his presumption.

As he knelt in prayer, a hand touched his shoulder. Behind him in the shadows stood a man well along in years.

"Father," he addressed the priest, "I have been away from the confessional for twenty years. I want to come back to God."

He made a sincere confession. Then the priest was convinced that his eloquence and efforts had not been wasted to bring about such a conversion as this. So he asked the man what it was in his sermon that had moved him so much.

"It was the greatest sermon I have ever heard. . . . And the words that went to the bottom of my heart were those you repeated over and over :



'What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.' (John xiii: 7.)

"Years ago," he continued, "my daughter went away to a convent to become a nun. I refused to give her my consent. It seemed to me insane that a girl with the talent my daughter possessed should wish to bury herself in this way. She would argue with me, plead with me, to relent and give her my blessing. I was adamant. And she always said to me: 'What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.'

"She went to the convent. That was twenty years ago. Twice a year she writes to me, and always closes her letters with these same words. To-night when I heard you repeating those words in your sermon, it seemed to me that I heard my daughter speaking to me, urging me to see the light. I heard little else of the sermon. I resolved to go to you to confession. And as I went, those words went with me: 'What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.'"

The story moved the priest so much that he

did not recall how his confidence in his eloquence had been shattered. Then, in the occupation of his duties he forgot about the man and his words.

About a week later, the man returned. With a radiant face he drew a letter from his pocket and said to the priest: "Read this!"

The letter was from his daughter in the convent and was *dated the morning of his conversion*. It read:

"This morning at Mass I was praying to mother in heaven for you as I always have done, as I always do, when suddenly there came to me a deep consolation, and in an instant I knew that mother's intercession had brought you back to God. . . ." The letter ended with these words: "I hope that thou knowest now."

The priest who told me of this said: "After he went away I resolved to put no more trust in my unaided eloquence."

The experience of this priest is but one instance in thousands exemplifying the great power of the Communion of Saints.

## VI

### APPARITIONS

**T**HE saints are interested in our supernatural welfare. They are ready to help us for the good of our souls. But the souls of the saints are in the hands of God, and it is clear that they can do nothing for us without His permission.

With these thoughts recapitulated, we are ready to answer the question:

“Will God sometimes allow the saints to communicate visibly with us?”

As in the discussion relating to the souls in purgatory, there are some theologians who maintain that a miracle is necessary to have a saint appear to us. So, again, we will consider the extreme case, and endeavor to show that there are reasons in favor of believing that God will perform even a miracle in order that the soul of a saint may appear to us.

First of all, we must remember that a real miracle can be performed only by God Himself, though He may perform it through the ministry of another. When we read of this or that man performing a miracle we understand that in that particular miracle the man was God's agent.

As before, we will leave the realm of Official Revelation and consider the Mind of the Church. It is true that the apostles performed miracles for the propagation of the faith, as did also the disciples. “. . . they going forth, preached everywhere; the Lord coöperating with them, and confirming the word with signs that followed.” (Mark xvi: 20.) “Amen, amen, I say to you,” said the Saviour, “he that believeth in Me, that works that I do, he shall do also, and greater than these he shall do.” (John xiv: 12.) Yet we must not forget that these words refer to His friends while living in this world and not directly to the saints in heaven.

The Church has always recommended as a pious and beneficial practice the veneration of the saints, their relics and images. “It is good and

useful to invoke them (the saints) supplicatingly and to take refuge in their prayers, power, and help, to obtain benefits from God through His Son Jesus Christ, Our Lord, Who is the sole Redeemer and Saviour." (Council of Trent; apud Denzinger; No. 984.) Furthermore, she condemns all who censure Catholics for such veneration. "The holy bodies of saintly martyrs and others now living with Christ—which bodies were the living members of Christ and the temple of the Holy Ghost, and which are by Him raised unto eternal life and glorified—are to be venerated by the faithful, for through these bodies many benefits are bestowed by God on men; so that they who affirm that veneration and honor are not due to the relics of saints, or that these and other sacred monuments are uselessly honored by the faithful . . . are wholly to be condemned, as the Church has already long since condemned and now also condemns them." (Id. No. 985.) And again: "The images of Christ, and of His Virgin Mother, and of the Saints, are to be used and retained, especially in churches, and due

honor and veneration is to be given to them . . . because the honor which is shown them is referred to the originals which they represent; so that by the images we kiss, and before which we uncover our heads, and kneel, we adore Christ, and venerate His Saints whose likeness they represent." (Id. No. 986.)

The Church, then, places great value on the power of the saints to intercede for us. Before she pronounces a person "blessed" or a "saint," she requires indubitable testimony of miracles wrought by God through the intercession of that person, and she exhorts her children to seek the aid of that saint in heaven whose intercession was so powerful on earth. The many accounts of miracles in the lives of the saints and in church history show clearly that the Lord is willing to perform miracles on the intercession of His friends in heaven when there is good cause. From these considerations, there is no reason to deny that Christ, for some good reason, will allow the soul of a saint to appear on earth, even were a miracle necessary, when the appearance of that



saint is to help some person or to aid the Church. Of such apparitions there are many testimonials in the Church. Not all accounts of apparitions, of course, must be believed. But many of these accounts are authenticated as far as it is possible to do so and are approved by the Church or at least tolerated by her. A careful study of these apparitions leads one to believe that it is almost a certainty that the souls of saints not only *may* but *do* appear on earth.

Many and beautiful are the accounts of the apparitions of the Blessed Mother and the saints. These are well known among the faithful. But there is a story of one saint whom very few know—St. Philip of Jesus, a Franciscan, born in Mexico in 1570, who suffered martyrdom in 1597, being the first to sacrifice his life for Christian truth in Japan. He was beatified by Pope Urban VII in 1627.

The martyr's mother was alive at the time of the beatification. Though an aged woman, she attended the unusual and solemn ceremony in the great old Mexican cathedral, the beatification of

the first Mexican saint. Her heart was filled with great joy, not so much at the attention she received, for it is a rare and striking thing for a mother to be alive at the beatification of her martyr son, but because she was a woman of deep faith, and unspeakable delight was hers that her son had proved such a worthy soldier of Christ.

The climax of her long life was reached. Her joy was overwhelming. The sublime ecstasy of those moments was too much for her . . . and three days after the ceremony death came to take her from the world. As she was dying, she saw her son come down from heaven, and rejoiced that it was he who was to conduct her soul before Christ.

## VII

### THE ANGELS

ONE cannot read very many pages of either the Old or New Testament without finding some mention of the angels. God created an invisible as well as a visible world, we say in the Creed, a world of angels as well as a world of men. It is of this invisible world, with which we are in constant touch, that I am now going to write.

Life is a warfare on earth, said Job. God, our Father, gives each one of us a guardian angel, in order that we may not enter that momentous struggle without someone to advise, protect and befriend us. To most of us He gives still another angel,—our mother, who taught us, when first our affections were being formed, to love not only God and His Blessed Mother but our guardian angel also. Before we were born, says Suarez

(vide: "De Angelis") the guardian angel of our mother watched over both; but when we came into the world, another angel, surely a friend of the guardian of the mother, came prepared to guard us.

It is a truth of faith that God created the angels—pure spirits that have not a corporeal body. These pure spirits, as we read in scripture, minister to God, and besides, are used by Him in communicating with men. Sometimes, He entrusts an angel with the lofty mission of acquainting man with the will of heaven, as when the Angel Gabriel announced the decree of Incarnation to the Blessed Virgin. Sometimes He charges an angel with a special mission that lasts a long while, as in the beautiful story of Tobias. Again, angels are commanded to execute the justice of God; as when we read of the destruction of Sodom. And, finally, as we read in several places in holy writ, He commissions the angels to take special care of each one of us. "He hath given His Angels charge over thee," say the Fathers, refers not only to all who hope

in God, but to all men. Christ Himself, speaking to the children presented to Him, said, in those words of incomparable beauty: "Their angels in Heaven always see the face of my Father." (Matt. xviii: 10.) St. Paul, talking of the faithful, asked: "Are they (the angels) not all ministering spirits sent to minister for these, who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?" (Ad. Heb. i: 14.) Because of these considerations St. Jerome writes: "So great is the dignity of our souls, that from birth each one has an Angel Guardian." And the same is what the Fathers affirm, the theologians confirm, and Catholics believe.

From the texts above referred to and many others which we might have quoted from the holy writings, as well as from the constant and universal tradition of the Church two facts are certain:

1. That there is an invisible world of spirits.
2. That these spirits receive missions from God for us mortals, and for this reason are called angels or "messengers."

Although invisible, these spirits play a distinct part in the government of the world by Divine Providence. To them He entrusts many of His enterprises. Obviously, they must have some means of communication.

These may be of two kinds: natural, or supernatural. Natural means are those that operate according to the laws of nature, whether or not those laws are known to us. Supernatural means are those which require, to operate, a power beyond the laws of all created nature.

Many of the natural phenomena are well known to us. We may know the laws that govern these means; or we may not know these laws and still be able to employ them to produce certain effects. A child, for instance, may not be familiar with the simplest law of music. And yet, in spite of his ignorance, that child may be able to play a tune in accordance with musical laws. Besides this, there may be many laws of nature, concerning the existence of which we have not the slightest idea.

According to the sacred scriptures, angels, as



messengers of God, or, at least, with His permission, have wrought wonders inexplicable to us. The laws that govern these wonders are outside our knowledge. The means employed by these angels are *extraordinary* from *our* point of view; yet they may be but *ordinary* for the angels. Those means, totally unknown to us, but clearly known to the angels, form a subdivision in the general order of nature that is commonly called, "preternatural." In other words, the angels possess means of accomplishment which are not known to man. These means are *connatural to them*; and although they are not outside of all created nature they are, nevertheless, *not connatural to us*.

An example may help to explain this distinction. We may consider two states among the people of the world: that of poverty and that of riches. In order to determine the limits of each state we will declare the man whose income is fifteen dollars a week or less to be in a state of poverty; the man whose income is over five thousand dollars a week, in the wealthy class. The

wealthy man can do many things which the poor man cannot do, because his means are greater. We are the poor, and the angels are the rich. Accomplishments connatural to the angels in their state are not connatural to us. They, with their power and knowledge, can do what we, because of our weakness and ignorance, cannot do.

With these considerations in mind we come to our last subject in the Communion of Saints—the angels.

Can the angels communicate with us?

We have the answer in Scripture. They can. Moreover, they have done so, and in a clearly perceptible way. Although, according to the opinions of the theologians, they need the permission of God (general or particular), they do not ordinarily have to employ a *supernatural* power. It is enough usually for them to use the powers connatural to them. These powers, as we have seen, we call “preternatural.”

Veneration and invocation of the angels have been customs from the first centuries of the Church. The Fathers and ecclesiastical writers

have gone to great labor to study and explain to the faithful the nature of angels.

The Church not only invokes the angels in official prayers, in her litanies, ritual and the holy sacrifice of the Mass, but she celebrates the feast of the Guardian Angels all over the world on October the second, and for the Archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, she has set apart three days each year.

In many countries the feast of the Guardian Angel of the nation is celebrated, and everywhere we find chapels, churches, and shrines, dedicated to the Angels of God or to some of the Archangels. The Lord is pleased with this veneration, and bestows numberless benefits upon the faithful who invoke these members of the spirit world.

There are few devotions more beautiful than that to the Guardian Angel taught to the little ones at their mothers' knees. This is the personal angel who watches over the child in sleep and at play. He is with him on his journeys, and perhaps it is this watchful guide who stays his hand or foot when danger or death is near. He

carries the child's thoughts to heaven, and, returning, brings back to him radiant fancies and quiet dreams. But when the child grows to be a man, when his humility leaves him and he no longer marvels at the wonders of the universe, he forgets his angel. Nevertheless, this holy guide is with him still, watching him faithfully through his indifferent years, and rejoicing when the narrowed eyes are opened wide once more, and, child-like, gaze upon the Father in heaven.

Whether we be great or lowly, rich or poor, our angel helps and protects us, and when we die, if we die in God's friendship, it is he who conducts our souls to heaven.

“And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and he was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.” (Luke xvi: 22.) So, the Church asks God at burial to command His angels to take the departed soul and waft it to Paradise, and when blessing our graves, she pleads that He appoint a guardian angel to watch over our mortal remains.

## VIII

### DEVILS AND THE DAMNED

**W**E come now to the last inhabitants of the spirit world—the devils and the souls in hell.

First of all we ask: Can the souls of the damned appear to us?

There are no texts in Scripture that afford a definitely affirmative or negative answer to this question. But it is possible to adduce sufficient considerations to give a most probable reply.

Looking back over some of our previous chapters it appears that the liberty of departed souls is usually in proportion to their sanctity. Thus, the saints in heaven are bound by the love of God. The souls in purgatory, on the other hand, are under God's Infinite Justice as well as His Infinite Mercy. The souls of the damned are absolutely under the control of Divine Justice.

This is a frightful consideration but one that is true according to the belief of the Church and the teaching of Christ: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." (Matt. xxv:41.) It is clearly put forth in the Symbol of St. Athanasius: ". . . And they who have done good things shall go into eternal life; they though who have done evil shall go into eternal fire. . . . This is the Catholic faith and unless a man believe it faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved." (Denz. N. 40.)

There are several texts in Scripture that seem to declare that it is impossible for the souls of the damned to leave hell. For instance, our Lord says: "Having bound his hands and feet, cast him into exterior darkness . . ." (Matt. xxii: 13.) From which it would appear a person bound in such a manner would be incapable of motion. And, in the parable of Lazarus, when Abraham tells the rich in hell: ". . . and between us and you is fixed a great chaos; so that they who would pass from hence to you cannot, nor from thence come hither"; there, also, seems



to be a reason for upholding this contention. And it is perfectly true, both from these texts and others, that the damned cannot leave hell if by "leaving" one understands an interruption or temporal suspension of those pains that are eternal and perpetual. But if by "leaving" hell is understood "an apparition of the soul of one damned, without any interruption of his punishment," the Catholic writers admit, with St. Thomas, that "This can be believed, that sometimes God may permit the soul of one damned to appear to the living to teach them and terrify them." (Sup. Ques. lxix: Art. 3.)

Accordingly, following the opinion of St. Thomas, who quotes St. Gregory the Great (Dialogues B. IV) in his favor, an opinion that is held by many theologians, and which seems to be confirmed by the many apparitions of this nature in the lives of the saints, we may say: yes, the souls of the damned can communicate with us in a perceptible way.

And now the final question: **Can the devil communicate with us?**

The answer is not dependent merely on the opinions of theologians. For Catholics the answer is Yes, and it is based upon fact with a foundation in Holy Scripture. In the Book of Job (Chaps. i and ii) we see how the Lord allowed Satan to destroy Job's property, and hurt his family, and even Job himself. And in the Book of Tobias (Chap. III) we read of the devil Asmodeus killing seven men. In the Gospels we discover many instances of men possessed by the devil and tortured by devils in diverse ways. Of these instances there is need of mentioning only one (Luke viii: 26-33): "And they sailed to the country of the Gerasens. And when He was come forth to the land, there met Him a certain man who had a devil now for a long time . . . And when he saw Jesus, he fell down before Him; and crying out with a loud voice said: What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beseech Thee, do not torment me. And Jesus asked him, saying: What is thy name? But he said: Legion; because many devils were entered into him. And they besought

Him that He would not command them to go into the deep. And there was a herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought Him that He would suffer them to enter into them. And He suffered them. The devils, therefore, went out of the man, and entered the swine; and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake and were stifled.”

This is a characteristic case of possession. From it alone we perceive that the devil, with the permission of the Lord, can and has possessed man. Hence, it is a matter of divine faith that the devil has communicated with men in a tangible way. Whether or not the devil *now* appears to men, or that there at present actually exist men possessed by the devil is not a matter of faith. From the Mind of the Church, however, we may be almost certain that such communication or possession is not only possible, but a fact.

The Church, for example, has exorcisms in her baptismal ritual, beseeching God not only to take the soul of the catechumen out of the power of the devil, but to restrict that power from the body

of the newly-baptized. Again, there is a special order among the Minor Orders of the Church called the "Exorcist." The bishop in the ordination bestows upon him who receives this order special power over demoniacs. Finally, in the ritual we have the whole ceremony for the exorcism.

I do not maintain that these exorcisms are necessarily infallible in their application or universally successful in their results. For once it happened that even the apostles could not cast out a devil from one possessed. (Mark ix: 17.) But that is not the question at this point. I simply adduce the Mind of the Church to show that the devil may take possession of a man even *now*. It is for this reason that the Church is prepared to help her children against the power of Satan. Determining whether or not some particular case is actually one of possession is altogether outside of divine faith. A priest, for instance, may deem it wise to use the ceremony of exorcism for a certain person. Yet we may remain of our own opinion. The Church has never

determined, to my knowledge, that any particular case, outside those in scripture, was actually a case of possession. St. Paul tells us that "the wicked one shall be revealed . . . whose coming is according to the working of Satan, in all power and signs and lying wonders." (II Thess. ii:8, 9.) And he who reads the thirteenth chapter of the Apocalypse may see that God will allow Satan strange powers at certain times, and Satan with these powers will work wondrous things for the deception of many.

I can now give, in a few sentences, the substance of this matter. First, the devil has powers in the preternatural world that are connatural to him. While these powers are not outside of all created nature, nevertheless they are not connatural to us. The devil, with God's permission, has used these powers on several recorded occasions. Furthermore, he is able to do the same now, if God allows it; and we are sure that before the end of the world God will give him that permission. But we are also certain that the devil is powerless unless God grants him special permis-

sion. This is a great consolation to us who realize that the battle against our own weaknesses is hard enough without Satan entering so powerfully in the lists against us. This, also, is the Mind of the Church, shown so clearly in the beautiful prayers she employs in administering the sacraments, blessing holy water, candles, and in other sections of her ritual. This, too, has always been the belief of the saints.



## IX

### THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

**T**HERE is one subject more for me to touch upon before I close this endeavor of mine to give, in a few brief chapters, an outline of the constitution and an appreciation of the power and beauty of the Communion of Saints. It is,—the Providence of God.

Words fail me. All the old phrases and all the new are dull, impotent messengers for the simplest concept of the goodness and wisdom of God. I feel as did the man in the legend who endeavored to hold the brilliant vast heavens in the grip of his hand. One can discover the Providence of God in the history of nations and in the stories of our own lives. It is everywhere, like the atmosphere, flooding all earth; warm and beneficent, like early summer sunlight. A little

reflection will bring each one of us a deeper realization of it.

And so, here, I merely set down a few thoughts, in the hope that they will move some who read to consider more frequently, and to place more trust in this influence of God in our lives.

Many on earth have forgotten, it often seems, that there is such an influence in their lives. And many, on the other hand, appear to know the workings of Providence better than God Himself; for according to their own light, they interpret this event or that to be under the immediate direction of God. It is truly a holy and consoling thought to believe that God disposes everything for our own good; and it is a worthy practice after either punishment or reward to say humbly: "We thank You for all, for You know better than we what is good for us." But, to attribute to God some purpose or end which He, ordering events in His infinite wisdom, never intended, or to speak of this or that event in our lives presuming that we know why God has ordered or per-

mitted it, as if we were the counsellors of God, is simply presumptuous. Such an attitude is against the whole spirit of the Catholic Church. It is not such that is meant when we speak of the Providence of God.

Providence is one of God's attributes by which He has not only "ordered all things in measure, and number and weight" (Wisd. xl: 21) with His infinite knowledge and power; but with His infinite wisdom and love "He reaches from end to end mightily and orders all things sweetly." (Wisd. viii: 1.) The influential and brilliant, as well as the unfortunate, the weak and the poor, are equally dear to Him, and "the very hairs of our heads are all numbered." (Matt. x: 30.) He does not forget to reward him who gives to any of these little ones a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple. (Matt. x: 42.) He takes care of the birds of the air and of the flowers of the fields . . . But He cares above all for us. "You are of more value than many sparrows." (Matt. x: 31.)

"Providence is the will of God," says St. John

Damascene, "by which all things are ruled according to right reason." It is universal, because, though God acts through secondary causes, yet all alike postulate divine concurrence and receive their powers of operation from Him. It is efficacious because all things minister to God's final purpose which cannot be frustrated. It is finally "*suavis*," that is, without violence, because it violates no natural law, but rather effects its purpose through these laws. (St. Thomas I. Q. xxii, xxiii, ciii and Contra Gent. III, xciv.)

As we said before, a true concept of Divine Providence includes not only God's power, knowledge and wisdom, but also His unlimited love. God's Providence, in the view that omits His love, is little short of a rigid determinism. Such is the fatalistic conception of the Mohammedans.

An example will serve to differentiate the true Christian idea from the false. There are two gardeners who understand equally well the care of flowers. Both plant and transplant, trim and train, water and watch with the utmost science and care. But one is cold, without affection. To

grow flowers is his business. And when his flowers are full grown he sells them for whatever price they will bring. But the other bends above his flowers and caresses them as though they were little children. He is with them at all hours, and his heart goes out to their helplessness and fragile beauty. When the time comes, he plucks them with tenderness. And he gathers them only because their day on earth is over and he may press them to his heart and bring them to live in the quiet of his home. The care and affection of the second gardener is like the real Providence of God.

The leader of an army or the head of a great corporation must ordinarily satisfy himself with general orders. These general orders may oftentimes prove injurious to many of his great organization, for it is impossible for him to anticipate every incident or have care for each individual's wants. The more an executive is able to provide for every small exigency and attend to every detail, by just so much is he a greater executive. Such a one is held up before men for his great

wisdom and foresight. He who is Omniscient, Omnipresent, Omnipotent, and who loves us with an infinite love, has disposed every man's lot and every incident in it, great and small, prosperous or adverse, and He leaves it to man's free will to bring him to the determined end of His divine plan. A sparrow cannot fall to the ground without Him, and the very hairs of our heads are all numbered . . . Yet, we are not as slaves chained to the galley seat. We are soldiers and servants, but we are, also, His children.

God directs, to the end provided by Him, all created beings of both the natural and preternatural order. Men and angels both, the former in the natural plane, the latter in the preternatural plane, are governed by His Providence. According to His Wisdom He uses natural, preternatural, or supernatural means to accomplish His ends. Natural means, connatural to men, and preternatural means, connatural to angels, are, as we have previously said, not outside the order of created nature. In His *supernatural* Providence, God, employing supernatural means, orders man



to the supernatural end determined by Him. In His *natural* Providence, God, employing only natural means, physical or moral, orders man and all natural things to the natural end determined by Him.

When God uses natural means to direct man, and preternatural means to direct angels, it is said He is acting according to the decrees of *His ordinary Providence*. Then He is but following the natural or preternatural laws established by Himself. But if, in order to produce a *physical* effect, which He has decreed to produce since eternity, He uses either preternatural or supernatural means, it is said that He is acting according to the decrees of *His extraordinary Providence*.

Under the decrees of God's extraordinary Providence come miracles. Hence it is clear, a miracle is not an unforeseen event on His part. It was decreed by Him at the same time that He decreed the natural laws. It is an effect produced by *other laws*, preternatural or supernatural, that are above the laws of nature as we know them in the first case, and above the laws of all created nature in the second.

“Those effects,” says St. Thomas, “are rightly called miracles which are wrought by Divine Power apart from the order usually observed in nature.” A law of nature may be generally defined as “a uniform mode of acting which a natural agent observes when under the same circumstances.” Laws of nature are not, as many moderns have somehow come to believe, like the laws of a court. They are merely statements by human beings of the way they have observed nature’s effects taking place constantly and in an unbroken repetition. We have always seen that out of a duck’s egg comes a duck, no matter whether the egg was hatched by a hen or in an incubator. Hence we say, out of the duck’s egg will come a duck. Yet, if God ordained it so, out of that egg might come an ostrich. That would be a miracle. A miracle may be supernatural in its manner of occurring and in its substance. For instance, the resurrection of a dead man is beyond all power of created nature, both in substance and manner. Yet a miracle may be natural in substance, but supernatural in manner. Such is the instantaneous cure of a broken leg.

Nature can cure a broken leg with man's assistance in forty days. It cannot, with the combined skill of all the men on earth, cure a broken leg instantaneously. Both classes of miracles are under the *extraordinary* Providence of God.

God is the author of nature and His work is so marvelously organized, down to the smallest detail, that it often happens that man, admiring such a wonderful accomplishment, so vast, so intricate, so well ordered and beautiful, has confused the work with its Author. This has been the origin not only of Idolatry but, especially in our time, of Naturalism and various forms of Materialism and denials of a Personal Deity. God, who knows the feebleness and littleness of man's mind, sometimes performs a miracle to show that He is the Master. Then men throw up their hands in astonishment and exclaim: "Lo! Nature's laws are broken." Herein one finds a moral reason for miracles: "But because of the people who stand about have I said it; that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me . . . Lazarus, come forth . . . and presently he that

had been dead came forth, bound feet and hands with winding bands, and his face was bound with a napkin. And Jesus said to them: Loose him, and let him go." (John xi: 42, 43.) Here we have an example of both the *extraordinary* and *ordinary* Providence of God. The resurrection of Lazarus was the proof of His infinite power over nature. Then using only natural means He ordered them to loose him.

The universal plan of Divine Providence embraces not only (so to speak) His own plans but the plans of His enemies also, the plans of the devil and the plans of men who, endowed with free will, are able to act as they wish and oppose the will of God and break His commandments. So we may consider two different forces: those who follow Christ under the flag that proclaims: "Thy Will be done!" and those bad angels and men who follow Satan and aid him in his work of destruction, crying: "We will not have this Man to reign over us." (Luke xix: 14.)

God, in His ordinary Providence, employs secondary causes to carry out His will. He is the

Author of nature and its laws, and accordingly uses secondary causes except when, for some special reason, He desires to accomplish His end in a direct and startling manner. Hence, miracles are so few. Oftentimes, because we do not see the working of secondary causes, we attribute unusual occurrences to accident or miracle, when they really happen through the Providence of God working in its ordinary but hidden way.

Therefore we must not forget that many astonishing things that appear to us to be "preternatural," because we do not understand the means to the end, are but natural phenomena produced by natural laws established by God, the Author and Supreme Master of nature.

## EPILOGUE

**W**E are inclined to forget that the visible world about us as well as the invisible world is veiled, in the wisdom of God, behind unfathomable mysteries. The earth and sky and sea hold in their undiscovered depths many secrets. Through our telescopes, we observe dimly the luminous bodies that dot the immeasurable space of the heavens; we speculate about those within the range of our vision; we gather, over centuries, some slight miscellaneous information; but beyond what we number is the innumerable, beyond what we see is the unseen. Eternity shall be upon us before we catalogue the countless creations of mysterious and unexplorable space. So, with earth and sea. "Time will have passed away," says Fabre, "before we know the truth of the gnat."

In the beginning, God created heaven and



earth. When He had disposed these two realms as suited His infinite invention—and that disposition, that endlessly intricate and varied arrangement of atoms, is beyond explanation—out of the slime of the earth, He created Man. Then, He breathed into him His life-giving spirit. Man became of this earth and yet above it. For God had given him a soul that linked him with the spirit world, a world that God had also, in His Wisdom, created.

So man is at the heart of a strange, impenetrable complexity of life. His feet are on the earth as he is of it; but in him is the spirit, and beyond, the worlds preternatural and supernatural. Toil as he may, think as he may, he is, by his unilluminated self, enmeshed in mystery. Even the future of his earthly life is hidden from him through the paternal providence of God. How can he presume to draw the impenetrable veil that hides from him the world of the dead?

There is nothing fundamentally new in this book; it constitutes an effort to put into contemporary terms, and to illumine in the light of the

present, simple truths that may be found in any theology. It has described the existence of the great spiritual profit-sharing corporation known to Catholics as the Communion of Saints; seeking to make clear how the infinite merits of Christ and, in a secondary way, the superabundant merits of the saints form the treasury of this powerful and extensive corporation. It has sought to emphasize the privileges enjoyed by this spiritual body, of which the head is Christ and of which we are the members. It has indicated how we, in baptism, are elected to membership and thus receive the gift of grace that, by means of the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, together with prayer and good works, will bring us into everlasting life. It has explained how, through the Sacraments, we may grow in grace, and how, when we have fallen from grace into mortal sin, we may be restored through the sacrament of Penance. It has sought to suggest the infinite value of the sacrifice of the Mass; and has described how we are helped to enter heaven by the sacrament of Extreme Unc-

tion. All of this has been the purpose of the first section of this book, which is concerned mainly with the living members of this Communion. Briefly, it has sought to explain what is meant by the Catholic when he says: "I believe in the Communion of Saints."

The second section of the book aims to explain our relations with the dead, according to the doctrine of the Catholic Church. It tells of purgatory, where the souls of the dead endure a painful purification before they are permitted to enter the immaculate presence of God. It indicates how the faithful may assist these poor souls by prayer, good works and indulgences and, above all, by the sacrifice of the Mass. Thus, it comes to ask if the souls in purgatory can communicate with us, and, if so, in what way. There follows an explanation of how the Saints observe us and intercede for us, and how they may appear to us in a visible manner when God, in whose hands they are, permits it. Thus, it evolves a description of how the angels (who are appointed by God to take care of us) may also appear to us when

God allows them to do so for some special purpose. And finally, it makes clear that even the devil may appear to men and take possession of them with the permission of God; and how, likewise by His special permission, the souls of the damned may visit men on earth. All this reveals the existence of a world inhabited by spirits who, in one way or another, are in constant spiritual contact with us, and who can communicate with us.

Catholics, therefore, are true "spiritualists," believing as they do in God a Spirit; in angels, good and bad, true spirits; and in man's spiritual soul that lives forever after the body is dead. The Catholic believes, furthermore, that these dead souls and the angels, good and bad, may appear to him on earth when God chooses. This, then, is *true spiritualism*.

But Catholics do not believe that the souls of the dead communicate with the living on earth at the whim of men or at the summons of a medium. This is *spiritism*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See "Spiritism and Common Sense," by C. M. de Heredia, P. J. Kenedy & Sons, New York.

The Catholic, seeing himself at the heart of a maze of mysteries and knowing the teaching of the true Church, holds it folly to seek to call to him the souls of the dead. He looks upon such spiritism as a desecration, and moreover, as a superstitious practice in which no sensible man would indulge. When, in his yearning, he meditates on the dead, he turns to his Church and to her beautiful teaching of the Communion of Saints. There he finds courage and comfort. There he learns, as the saint of old, that faith, even if it were not the greatest of virtues, is still the greatest of consolations.

FINIS















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